

Swamiji: Man proposes and God disposes. Make your goals, strive for your goals, and accept all that God wishes to give. We will make our best efforts. But there are times when even our best efforts fall short. Then we seek forgiveness for our short-comings and forgive ourselves as well.

*** 11/20/14

after every fall
new fruit
maybe

this is no el nino
this is heat like
we've never known

its own making its own

*** 1/20/15

She was four years-old and offering a banana to a picture of Kali. She said, "Kali! Eat! Eat! Everybody says you are a goddess! Why don't you eat this banana?!"

And to Shree Maa's amazement, Kali's tongue came out of the picture and ate the banana—all of it!

*

Also when she was four, she was sweeping, and when she was done she threw the broom into a corner. Then she heard Ramakrishna's voice telling her to respect all things through her actions.

*** 1/21/15

She couldn't go see
the 280 year-old saint,
Ram Nath Aghori Baba.

Her mother wouldn't let her.
The family went, everyone went.

Her mother had had it
with her daughter running off
to see sadhus.

So Maa stayed home and went into meditation.
She wasn't burning incense,
but she smelled it.
And then Ram Nath

told her to go see him.

She didn't know how she would get there.
It was across town,
and she didn't have the fare.

He said,
Go find it in your uncle's shirt pocket.

When she got out of the house,
a rickshaw was there.
She had the money for it
and two busses.

She got to the Kamakhya Temple,
and Ram Nath was leaving.

When he saw her,
he shouted,
You came!

He blessed her and said,
You must take care of this world!
And he said to the people standing there,
This Shree Maa is an example
of truth for the Kali Yuga.

*** 1/29/15

According to Yoga astrology, this is the dark age, the darkest of the cosmic calendar. However, an individual can be in peace and light in any yuga.

*** 1/29/15

Shree Maa was raised by her grandmother—her mother had other children.

When Shree Maa was going into samadhi more and more, she decided it was time to leave her grandmother's home.

She went to Gauhati. She said she would go there and live with her mother, but she was really going to spend more time at the Kamakhya temple there.

So she was at the temple, standing in line with her devotees outside in the rain. Once a year, there are three days when the natural spring in the temple turns red. When the doors opened, a bright light went straight to her, and she went into samadhi. She heard Mother Kamakhya say, "Now you can be free."

Back at her mother's home, her mother, her family, and others became very mean, didn't think Maa was anything special. Maa says this was the "forces of confusion." In order to clear the confusion, Maa picked up an axe and started hitting her head. But her head remained unharmed. She woke up the unbelievers.

*** 1/23/15

In Ravana's kingdom, the Shiva lingam went underground.

Go pray to Shiva, Ravana's mother said. Go pray and sing to make him happy again. This world will dissolve if we don't please Shiva.

At Kailash, in the Himalayas, Ravana sang many songs and prayed with great devotion.

But Shiva continued to hide.

Ravana built a great fire and gave his offerings to the flames with more devotion.

But still Shiva stayed away.

Ravana had ten heads, and he cut off one and offered it to the fire.

No Shiva.

He cut off another head and gave it to the fire.

No Shiva.

He cut another and still no Shiva.

And another and another until he was at his last head.

It was then Shiva came and gave his blessings.

And this is how the earth was saved.

*

Shre Maa left her family home.

She walked and walked until she came to the Brahmaputra River, and there she jumped to end her human life.

But in midair she saw a bright light, a big wind blew her back, and a voice from the sky said, You can't leave! You have lots to do! I am you!

She fell onto the bank and went unconscious.

When she awoke, she was at Ram Nath's temple, the 280 year-old saint who had blessed her at the Kamakhya temple. A devotee had found her and brought her to the temple.

She says, The story of Ravana is a true story. It's a real story, but who will believe that one man had ten heads! They won't believe it! Because this is the Kali Yuga, the Age of Darkness. You won't see divinity in the Dark Age. This is the fourth yuga, and people need to understand that these kinds of things happened in earlier ages.

*** 1/27/15

I stand at the seeming perpetual crossroad of my life that could turn to almost any direction.

Yet I carry the history of always and never.

Riddled with the faultlines of the ever unforeseen unexpected.

We hardly know ourselves.

The ancient rishis say this age holds 432,000 years and we're only part way through.

We have to carry on with these days,
act as if we understand
purpose, import.

Let peace come through us.

*** 1/30/15

So she left home.

When she got to the train station, a man walked up to her and said he had a ticket for her to get to Kamarpukur—Ramakrishna's birthplace.

She arrived there and bathed in a pond. When she got out, there was a snake on the path, and she bowed to it. Everything was God to her.

A woman saw this, and she told Maa she would take her to the Ramakrishna temple. Once there, detailed personal stories started pouring out of Maa about Ramakrishna and the original temple.

And later still, in the middle of the night, the woman who had guided her to the temple came to Maa's door and sat there. Maa couldn't sleep and was going to go out to walk. They walked together all night, and Maa told more stories about Ramakrishna. The woman was sure then that

Shree Maa was the reincarnated Sarada Devi. The woman had been a child when her family took care of Sarada, when Sarada herself was very young.

*** 1/31/15

The high mountains have no snow and in December had a lot of rain. How can we know our world? It is not what it was. A rare sight: a red fox out of its hiding.

My friend says she's drinking lake water above timber line—where there isn't much animal traffic. Drinking the water as is, unfiltered.

*** 2/1/15

All day the sun blazed; noticed or unnoticed, it did what it does. Even now it burns, while it is dark here but for the big bright moon. The sun is somewhere there, shining. How can it be that it, too, is dying? We are so sure, if nothing else, each day will be illuminated by the revealed or hidden sun.

*** 2/8/15

The body fallible, the feeling volatile. Big moon getting smaller by the day. The rush of creating ideas of who to be is going, gone. After awhile it's a time of rest. The ground in the pause before germination. Am I done growing or making new seed? Making fast orbits around the giving sun, one day shattering. All the pieces to care of and to be taken care of. And all the twos have been all along the one. The million moments of wanting to get to the clear answer. Gone, going, the million and one moments. How do you fill your time?

Birds coming in for seeds. Practical walking toward. In the motion. What's called peace. Make columns, make notes on pieces of paper. Having the feeling of contentment. Sing or not, it's all the highest. Touching sun and going far past.

*

Maa has a dream. Ganesh tells her to go get a boat.

She goes to the river. They say a storm is coming so no crossing. But a big boat arrives, and she gets on with her devotees.

They are crossing. They are in the middle of the river and whoosh! a big storm swoops in. Huge waves bat the boat around. The engine dies. The passengers are screaming, Help! Help us!

She is off in samadhi. After, she says to Ganesh, So this is why you told me to come!

When she returns, they have gone in another direction from their intended destination. They are at the shore of the Kamakhya temple. All of them alive. The devotees gratefully bow down to Maa, and go into the temple and fervently thank God for saving them.

Maa tells us about a disciple who asked her teacher how she could see God. The guru took her swimming and suddenly held the disciple's head underwater until she was nearly drowned. When the disciple came up, gasping, and could finally get her breath she asked, Why did you do that? The guru said, When you want God as much as you wanted to breathe just now, you'll see God.

Maa says being under the water is like being under the forgetful veil of Maya. Sometimes we come up for air, especially when an experience jolts us awake, for remembering God.

*

Three sadhus asked Narada Muni, How long will it be until I see God?

To the first sadhu he said, Ten thousand years.
And the sadhu was very sad to hear this.

To the second sadhu he said, Twenty thousand years.
And the sadhu went into a deep depression.

To the third sadhu he said, Can you count all the million little leaves in that tamarind tree?

Ok! the sadhu shouted with glee, Sure, 'cause I'll get to see God!
She was so thrilled, she was dancing, her heart's faith was brimming over.

And then, like a flash of lightning, her certainty snapped her past the million years, and she saw herself in God.

*** 2/9/15

Showers of sunlight, clouds of leaves. The sky space between minutes. Guesses, it's all guessing.
I've given over part of my life to the vices of fear and desire.

*

Krishna wanted peace, not war. He said to King Dhritarashtra, Please give back the Indraprastha kingdom.

But the king refused.

Krishna went away, and came back, this time asking, Please—at least this time, give back five villages.

But the king still refused.

Krishna then showed his divine form, in its dazzling light, but the king, still stuck in his selfishness, could not see Krishna in this form.

The king said to his guards, Take away this cow herder!

And, we're told, only four people in the court could see the beautiful, bright divine Krishna.

*** 2/12/15

A doubter stood at the entrance of the Annapurna Temple demanding that Maa give her something. Maa had a handful of rice—she expected this encounter though did not know its outcome. She gave the rice, and she went into the temple.

Later, the doubter told her she became a believer. She cooked the handful of rice for her daughter's wedding—and it served 500 guests.

*** 2/15/15

For now, rain has been released after three days of a leaden, cold sky, fitful wind, crosscurrents of warm and cold. It waited for night cover, then let loose this good downpour. This after two warm, dry winter months.

The ground will puff up again, the weeds will multiply and be easy pickings. The mockingbird who has been singing in the night will refrain. The collected leaves and dust will move off. The chaparral, right away with the first drops, will release its sweetness.

And I am turned into She Who Listens. Just on the other side of these walls and roof, a great dance of rain taps its rhythm, it changes, it is a lullaby then a startling pounding, the drain pipe drumming.

*

One day, Maa wanted to see monkeys, but the priest there, in the Himalayan temple, said there were none.

The next day, when she came out of samadhi, she saw hundreds of monkeys in the forest and around the temple. They were dancing.

She and Swamiji fed them all.

*

In another small village, she made a sweet, ladu, forty pieces to give devotees. But one hundred children arrived. Still there was enough for each child, and not just for one day but for three days. For three days they fed whoever came, and still, there was some left over.

*** 2/22/15

Crackle, whoosh last night in the rain. I thought it was strange, there must have been a lot of leaves that had been stuck on the roof, coming down with a brimming over of collected water from the rain gutter. And a little later, the same sound, but louder.

In daylight, it's half the carob tree, fallen, just missing the back of the house.

*** 2/23/15

All day, wind moving restlessly about, stirring cold into every warm place.

*** 2/27/15

Three days of rain, persistent and heavy; going past saturation.

A crack all along the wall above the window and water coming through. But where is the crack outside, where is the water being given entrance?

*** 3/2/15

And then the day came after the passionate rain when the sky was cloudless. And the beauty of warmth returned.

All that the full moon might ask of us is that we notice the details.

Or the essence of nothing in all our roamings.

See the faithfulness of sun and moon. We could be more intimate with each other. Know now is the time for tree blossoms.

It's not so much heritage, lineage, looking back, as it is looking in.

Within the interior, all directions point to one center.

That stays in place.

*** 3/4/15

Suddenly the front and back yard were overtaken with desert marigold, plenty of yellow flowers on small and tall stems, lifting their heads as if singing in chorus to the bright sky.

*** 3/7/15

1974: Swamiji does a fifteen day puja. At the end, he has disciples make rice pudding for the villagers, enough for 100. They keep the pot partially covered, as instructed, while they serve.

And they are amazed they keep serving from the same pot to more and more people. In the end, they realize they have served 500 people.

*** 3/11/15

Mid-march, high heat again. Circling smaller and smaller, less cold, more heat.

Oh, self, don't go there to the land of meltings. Be in my temperate self.

They say Buddha lived many lifetimes in order to be able to arrive at Bodh Gaya, to sit for his enlightenment, to be then sharing wisdom that has illuminated us all these years.

So here we are in the heat. Sirens blaring, fires, heart attacks. And grievances, irritations ignite.

Just because there is this heat, does not mean it is our destiny to be cranky. We already have the riches. What is there, really, to want? Inside, outside, goodness. Bright light.

*** 3/13/15

The spring greens that revived enough to make a show despite the dry winter have been flash dried by this insistent returned heat.

If birds are surviving, some of them, able to forage and sing and take journeys with wind, well, then, there is hope.

Praying for it all, ant, moon, my barometer knees. The hawk, over there staying, for now, in one place.

*** 3/14/15

Fracking toxic waste water has been released into the ground in Kern County for many years, going unregulated.

*** 3/29/15

In the Vedas, we are told that water covered the earth, all the earth, and from the sea the island was made and humans were made. The big wave's name was the Divine Mother. In Her, we were one. We are. We have not yet found her beginning or the end of her. Thunder can not say her name. After our beginning, there were others. And before.

The library burned. It could not hold history. She will not be recorded. Wisdom sits within. Grants discovery in its own time. There is no hurry.

We sit at the sacred fire and say with each prayer, I am one with God. With each handful of rice, we throw in each of our desires. Even in our forgetting, we are remembered. No such thing as adrift from God.

The tree blooms in the drought.

You don't go away. All this time, every fire has been to burn the old, give thanks to the ones who cause us discomfort. She is the bridge. Here comes someone baring their teeth and hissing. And you get to see her in this someone, get into and through to your peace.

*

Water, then, at the start. Looking for the spring later. Why feel any anger, any sadness? There is someplace that is home. Get shoes on, take them off. Seeing stars, seeing lizard on warm rock. Making it up as we go along. Here, there is no perfection. Get to see into and through the water. Underneath the face, reflection.

*** 3/29/15

As a partial explanation: Knowledge is from the brain. I think and that becomes form from the formless. She is all water. As am I. What wisdom comes is always the spring the stream the river running through me. Dissolving self into selfless ocean.

Let me say it can't be said.

Wisdom lives; shimmering ripples. Rising, falling, appearing, disappearing.

She is the drop. She is the ocean.

*** 3/31/15

Beloved Yosemite is not what it was—as we've known it, but is becoming as it was in other lifetimes. Now drying up. Native fish swimming up to higher ground. Lyell Glacier going into sky, baring boulders. Forest giving in to beetle.

Now they say this is year four of drought. Now they say it is a thousand years turn since it was this dry.

*

We know out of times of this earth's drought or ice or fire yet another ecology has emerged.

The scientists are going to get the minnows that were in a stream and are now in a small pool that will soon be dry.

And sure enough, again! It's the beginning of April and it's another heat wave. It's night and the windows are open. Who can see the end of sky? Who can see the end of any God they call God?

We could ask, Have you ever had something happen in your life that you've tried to change, but it doesn't? It won't change?

And each of us would have to say, Yes.

*** 4/3/15

There is the lake bed, shiny penny-brown spots and parched grasses. But I'm told, and I know, there's the unseen spring. If we were to stay alive by the surface waters of the world, why would we go on, so often driven to extreme thirst by the weather of circumstances?

It must be the soul spring compelling our commitment to living with love and hope in hot winds and scoured land. It's how I read between the lines of rote ways. Just because some say follow us this way, trample ground, ignore sky, take whatever you can, some of us still don't go that way.

Yet none of us gets to be all pure.

Now they say four years. It's been a four year drought. Whatever, it has been hot a long time.

We used to know earth. We used to know where the water was. And where the stars were. We could see God in every place of our place.

So has there always been thirst for being more and less?

Did we then, as we do now, always have to set out looking?

Getting here and there a kind of talking with, a kind of satisfying spring.

Did we ever start out being already being, and being with, as if being water? Just being and not being, here and there and everywhere.

*** 4/4/15

She'd been begging as long as she could remember. She knew the desert of empty stomach.

There are the plans and the directions pointing one way and another. She could get as far as the hand holding out a bowl. Brief oasis.

So she got to the Buddha, the bowl like all others set out for her.

But this time, in this first meeting with this host, the Buddha, he said, If you say no thank you to this, just this time, I will give to you for the rest of your life.

And he held out the bowl, but she could not let go of her hunger. She could not say, No thank you.

*

Swamiji came to Bodh Gaya and sat under a tree and told his disciple Sushil that Buddha prayed and fasted at Bodh Gaya until he was very thin. Eventually, a woman, Sujata, came and encouraged him to eat her offering of rice pudding. He decided, at long last, to break his fast since it did not seem to be helping him get closer to God. And then, when he ate the pudding, he went into samadhi.

Swamiji went there with his disciple, Sushil, and decided to also pray and fast until the Goddess would come to him just as she had, as the woman Sujata, to Buddha.

And so Swamiji and Sushil sat and prayed, all day and night and all the next day, and just at sunset, a woman arrived, and offered them food. Then two men arrived with a big pot of dal. Swamiji saw, then, there were hundreds of people sitting up on the land watching his worship. He served everyone food, and then everyone danced and sang, thinking of Buddha and Sujata, of then and now.

*** 4/6/15

Every day now, there is more light, the day is growing.

*** 4/7/15

Sky started in edge-torn clouds, slow-moving east to the rising sun, held rain and kept it.

*** 4/7/15

It sprinkled a very short while here, and up in Northern California, they were happy to call it rain. All day the sky will receive thanks.

*** 4/8/15

Swamiji was so immersed in his prayers that he didn't know the wood stacked outside the hawan kund/ceremonial fire pit had caught fire and even his tunic had begun to blaze.

Maa was in samadhi but she started to be aware that she felt like she was burning. She came out of samadhi and saw what was happening. She leapt to her feet and put a blanket on Swamiji and poured water on the wood.

Swamiji went on praying, and at the end of the day's chanting, he came to see his surroundings, and it was then he realized that part of his tunic had been burned away.

*

He was going from small temple to small temple with his bag of books and few essential worship tools. Long days were strung together with focused prayers. At the time, he spoke very little, and he could go away into samadhi often. Humility was not put on like a shirt or adrift in floating questions: do you want more and more money and work? Or do you want to give prayers? There came a time when the answer was completely clear. First in the city of Kalcutta, then in the Himalayas, then back to cities throughout India, then to America.

So he did it, she did it. Left in order to become. But, he says, you don't just walk off, go on a long, water-only fast. You must prepare and practice before getting to there.

*

One big, embracing blue sky. A new birdsong, a decaying tree. We get sky. It was and is. Generous light.

We're holding on because of this world's teachings. But sky—sky translates grasping into opening.

*** 4/18/15

Terrorists were disrupting the daily lives of the people of Gauhati in Assam, India. Shree Maa and Swamiji set up an outdoor tent and hawan kund/fire pit, to offer a nine-day public puja/worship of Durga.

On the eighth night, during the offering of arati/lights, Swamiji was in ecstasy. He rang the bell, then handed it to someone else to ring it, and went on that way with each instrument, becoming more enlivened with his devotional playing.

Then, when he had handed off every instrument, he sat down and instantly went into samadhi.

By morning, as they say, the lion laid down with the lamb, the terrorists who had attended had a change of heart. After that, peace prevailed in the entire region.

*

Janakpur, Sita Temple. Summer, 1982, Nepal: Swamiji chants the Devi Bhagavatam every day. In the afternoon, after chanting, he gives literal meaning to "lotus pose" by sitting on top of the lake's water and meditating.

*

For long periods of time, Swamiji was in small temples, alone, praying the the *Chandi Path*, the puranic prayers to Durga, all day, every day.

*

In the Himalayas, in Baddrinath, at the Badri Naryana Temple site, Swamiji would sit early in the morning in a very hot spring in the river, listening to Vina Gopala playing devotional ragas with his sitar. Vina's music was gloriously amplified by the surrounding mountains.

Swamiji meditated at the site behind the temple where the rishi Shankaracharya gave teachings. In his samadhi, Swamiji was with Shankaracharya. He wanted to stay there in that bliss, but Shankaracharya told him he had to come down from the mountains and share the wise teachings with seekers.

*** 4/25/15

Some say worshiping deities is only a step toward transcendence. Some say in the heart's devotion is the ultimate. Almost everyone is thirsty.

The ground is shifting, likely to quake because the water is sinking and going. It could be possible to bring it back if we paid closer attention to what we're using and how.

In our *Chandi* recitation, we are the goddesses and gods, bowing, praying, bringing her into a body form, made from light. Markendeya, the rishi narrator in this epic, tells us we've done this before—and we'll do it again. Tells us we get deluded and will be again; it's nature's nature. Tells us Goddess goes. And Chandi herself tells us she goes, but she returns.

Maa says we forget who we are. When she tells us about her life, we think of her, but she says we can also think about our own divinity.

She says Ramakrishna was dying and his disciple Vivekenanda started to doubt that Ramakrishna was a realized being, even though he had seen Ramakrishna so many times dancing and singing in ecstasy and being perfectly still in samadhi.

She encourages us to think of our divine self, that we have lived many lifetimes, that really it is one eternal life. And when a realized being appears in our life, such as Ramakrishna, we are being given the chance to deepen our awareness. She says, The more you feel, the more shining it will be. The more you churn cream, the more butter will come.

Clouds move in and then sun rises a little more and, then in an instant, all the clouds are gone.

Expect the unexpected.

Swamiji was doing a 108 day worship at a small temple in Bakreswar. One day in the midst of this time, Maa, who he had never met before, unexpectedly visited him. Goddess Kamakhya had told Maa to go find Satyananda [Swamiji] because they had work to do together. Maa came into the temple, didn't say a word, and put a flower on his head and a sweet into his mouth, and abruptly left.

At the end of his 108 days of prayer, Swamiji set out to find Maa. He knew he would find her, but he didn't know exactly where he would find her. He first went to the Dakshineswar Kali

Temple compound and sat in Ramakrishna's room, and he received in meditation the word "Belgalchia."

When he got to Belgalchia, Swamiji rode a rickshaw all over town, looking for Maa. He got to a little Kali temple, prayed, and the pujari there asked him as he was leaving why he had stopped there since it wasn't usual for foreigners to visit the little temple. Swamiji told him he was looking for Maa. The pujari asked him if he meant Shree Maa. Swamiji thought that the pujari didn't understand. Shree means respected, holy, and he was dressed as a sadhu, so he thought the priest did not understand he was looking for a saint. At that time he didn't know Maa's name, nor did he know that her name was Shree Maa. The pujari told him Shree Maa was in the house across the street.

Swamiji told the rickshaw driver to continue to wait. He went over to the house, knocked, and the man who opened the door was one of the people who had been with Maa when she had visited Swamiji in Bakreswar. The man said, She said you would come! She is up on the roof, and she has been in samadhi since yesterday. Please wait in the temple room.

Swamiji didn't have long to wait. Soon Maa came into the room and sat down, and Swamiji put his head in her lap.

And there they were, together again.

After that, Maa and Swamiji went to Gauhati, to the Kamakhya Temple to get Mother Kamakhya's blessing. A few days later, at the devotee's house they were staying at, Maa was in samadhi for two days. And she felt pulled back to her body. When she opened her eyes, she saw Swamiji's head in her lap again. She was sitting on the bed, and he was sitting on the floor, and she asked him why he brought her back. He said he wanted a boon/a wish, and that he wouldn't tell her until she promised first that she would give it to him. But she went back into samadhi.

And still, she felt pulled to return. She said, What do you want?

And he said, again, I want you to first promise that you'll give it to me.

And so she promised. He said, It's not time for you to leave. You have work to do in this world. Promise you'll stay.

And so she promised to stay and work with Swamiji. Later, she remembered that Mother Kamakhya had sent her to Swamiji because they had work to do together.

*** 4/11/15

Across the canyon, the sage in new flower stalks. In our Anza-Borrego desert, farmers pulling up groundwater for citrus trees. It could have been other crops back then, way back then, mesquite, pinyon, that wouldn't be so thirsty. But they didn't think about the water disappearing when they put the citrus trees in. Now their habits are hard to break. All that beautiful, trickle-down

mountain water going away faster than it can return. The underground lake going shallow, going. Do we have to be so sleepy? Because, for now, we can buy it?

Up north, the Winnemen are saying, Where are we going to go? If you raise the Shasta dam, raise the reservoir, where are we? Here is our temple, our puberty site, our food land; this is where we were born. Our people originated here, we came from this ground, this water is part of our family.

Nestle has been taking water for free out of the San Bernardino Forest and selling it.

The water is talking. The earth is talking. If we listen, we can hear it. If you go to one of the dry wells in our desert here, you will hear sighing. The well is taking in air but it wants water.

In Nepal, just yesterday, the earth protesting loudly, quaking, shaking, bringing down old and new shelters, edifices of security and satisfaction, tossing out distractions. Demanding attention. One moment the Mt. Everest camper was making soup, the next being tossed in avalanche cloud.

If I could improve more, I would be more careful. I would see ahead and see more clearly now. Let the mind settle, let the water go clear—in a land disrupted and marred. Learning, not too late, how.

*** 4/26/15

Compared to other sources, desalination is expensive and not favorable for the environment. Bringing ocean water into the system damages the marine larvae and sending back out just the brine disrupts the ecological balance.

*** 4/26/15

We believe
all relationships
must begin
with honesty

To be healthy with
local
state
federal
government
or
church

both of us
must be
healthy

When our history
is
denied
or
ignored

when we are treated
differently
than other tribes

when our
home sites
are destroyed
for money

it is impossible
to have
a healthy relationship

We pray
for
the perpetrators

They too
must heal

They gave us
bad spirits
that have visited
many of us
many generations

These bad spirits
give us
addiction
violence
depression
suicidal thoughts

work to take
our soul

When the perpetrators heal
the bad spirits leave

Being
a federally unrecognized tribe
exacerbates
our historic trauma

A relationship
never works
when one person is healthy
and the other is not

To restore our relationship
with the Creator
we do ceremony
we dance
sing
pray

We remember
our obligation
to take care of
Mother Earth
and all living beings

We make effort
to develop healthy relationships

with Pinnacles National Park
with California State Parks
with Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
with the U.C. Santa Cruz Mutsun Garden

We have made
our Mutsun Land Trust
to relearn
to re-member
our relationship with
Mother Earth
to know
how to take care of
and to gather plants here
for food, medicine,
baskets, tools,
we re-member making tools for hunting
we learn
our language

Paraphrase of quotes of tribal chair Valentin Lopen (Ahman Mutsun).

*** 4/28/15

Grasses are back to their usual gold. Wind, heat, and this morning fog. Wind gathering into more wind and still fog hovers on the edges.

I wanted to know how the saints did it, how they could get around the torments of vice, the detours of feelings. How they do it now, even now today. A living poem, story. And by the living, the dispensing of blessings. The poem coming through.

Time is always running out. When I wake from sleep, I am no one. And so in peace.

There is something to be done and that is why we are here. Three crows fly together on the insistent bold winds. The ground didn't get soaked in the strange, grey week. The lightest, briefest of rains fell. Who is to say what weather will be now? If anything teaches us not to predict, it is sky.

I suppose being a fool by mistakes made, by faulty guesses, goes under the tilling of days. Even though life on earth is a life of decay, yet there are the flowers. All the plans are being carried out by busy people.

And Peace Pilgrim left her home with no more home than the streets and sidewalks of the places where she would walk. No more plan than to talk to whoever wanted to talk with her about peace.

*** 5/1/15

Recently, water samples taken in the Central Valley have revealed that the oil industry's chemical solvents and oil appear in the groundwater. The toxin runoffs have not been regulated, but with the latest regulations will now be regularly monitored. Farmers have been irrigating their crops with the contaminated water, even though in some areas the water smells like petroleum.

*** 5/2/15

Be the clown, help people laugh, pick up the pieces from the bullfighter and flame throwers, dance around, be clumsy and nimble in it.

Once again, the sky is grey in the bookends of twilights. Misty this morning.

*** 5/4/15

Is it pushing the boulder up the mountain or just breathing into the space of what is? Around the edges and outside is no resistance. I come up to the ridge and on the other side is the limitless

sea. Inside this world, is all my worlds. The bag of wishes leaky with possibilities. The bag leaking seeds. In the wind-stirred ground, some seeds settle in, go slow, grow.

In time, they say, it's possible to look away from the flowers' colors, and see inside yourself vivid blooms. Well, you could go out the top of your head, go all the way past your busy head. Or we could stay where we feel the love of God. Ramakrishna said it's nice to stay there. Busy, but still thinking of our beloved. That's what matters; all else matters because of this one.

Draw a line in the lake water; there are two sides to the line but not for long. I am someone, for now. I am she who loves, who is the devotee of God. We are small waves, we say. We don't claim to be the ocean. Seeing it this way, we don't get in trouble. Don't have to get a stomachache eating all the treat. We just have the sweet of: I am your beloved servant, I am your child.

*** 5/5/15

Nothing was left but a few feathers by the back door from her morning catch. And in the afternoon twilight, I could not open the door—the foster cat was there with a kicking rabbit in her mouth which soon became her, her blood and muscle and bone.

*

Confucius said, There's no peace-filled country unless the state is peaceful, and there's no peace-filled state without a peaceful family, and there's no peaceful family without each person residing in peace.

Inside us is the outside. This is the world, remade.

*** 5/6/15

Sky settles down into late season cold. Maybe a little rain? For sure a lot of wind. Don't I begin and begin because if weather can, I can? The year, the date, my age less the sign of what will be than what is happening right now. Making peace bit by bit.

*** 5/7/15

Downpour. I walk under the break-up of clouds. I turn west and see sky gone to black. That black with cold wind there, and in an instant, here. Pouring down as if from a faucet. Less drops than near-stream falling from above. I get to the small oak and stay under it for shelter.

Getting too much, as if sky is forgetting, in one day, and afterwards, the new leaves, the persistent heat.

*** 5/8/15

The heat has made vegetables and fruit grow faster and disrupted normal planting cycles. Many crops are retailing at twice last year's cost.

*** 5/9/15

We're in the fog of the druggy way we use water, using what earth and sky freely give. Just this side of criminal. You can't keep up appearances in this way forever.

The grey sky is gone again, and it's late spring, strange cold, and icy rain. Now we get to be in the realm of blue sky and gentle warmth.

Somewhere for a little while you get to be nowhere. They say it can happen so quickly, in meditation or activity, sometimes you don't notice and you're back again.

No clouds in the east by the mountains. Maybe life goes on to deepen patience, appreciation. Shiva and Vishnu were too proud about their battle wins. And the goddesses, not afraid, walked away, taking away the energy they were giving those gods.

Light coming through at end of day, bright, and persistent bird chorus. The edge of a new week: no one is someone but they are for awhile. The unexpected arrives. Many will give over their planned schedule. The ground with spiders. The beach sand pulling out and coming back in if rocks will hold them, if river and creek get to run through.

*** 5/10/15

I'm babysitting, she's fussy and smiling and just getting how to reach and get what she's eyeing. Getting the lesson from the book of life. Why do babies and little kids always have pictures of animals?

*** 5/12/15

Flipping cold and hot, a sky of its own making. No use us guessing. Early and late, that's about all we can say of flower and crop, of bird flight and bug. Pointing at what's to come of us. We're praying to earth for earth, remembering this planet is our Goddess, too. The ground rumbles and big waves must be appeased.

The baby is too tired, and the only language she has for that is crying. And when she gets past crying, still the big staccato breaths. Such a rough time, and then at last the calm of sleep. Later, my friend and I talk about living as awake as we can, and to not be undone by what we don't get done, and remembering the edges and questions bring their own peace.

Can there be any explanation for a sky that held onto rain, and now just before summer, lets loose so much rain? And still the ground sponges it up and in two days is dry again. Dig in two inches, and there it is, the fact of these prevalent dry days.

How do we go on?

How? Maybe because the world of evidence and fact is not the only world. Under that world, country, state, city, neighborhood, and family, is the self, whose soul is peace itself.

My friend says in Italy the word “precarious” is used a lot.

Why not? It’s the truth of nature, this world, our bodies.

Little lights gathering, and already gathered, to our sun.

*** 5/13/15

A dry, warm winter and now, can you believe it, on the edge of summer, cold and bold, intense rain. Just to say, Keep on talking about me, your God, and I’m not going to give easy answers.

Maybe it’s the mass of inexplicable warm water out west in the sea. Or the huge vapor cloud they were so excited about monitoring, that had arrived early spring. Maybe there is just so much we still don’t know.

Scripps Institute of Oceanography has been exploring the deepest places of the ocean floor and finding other, *living* worlds there.

My friend in Italy said she’d heard a little about there being a drought here but she wondered it if was just hype, because hasn’t California always, so often, been in drought?

*** 5/14/15

More rain than we could have imagined in two days. Floods, streets as creeks. Another beginning.

They’re saying Nino could return, it could be a wet winter next round. They say ’98-’99 flooded in Northern California, but I remember when I lived there, the long, dry bouts between.

*

Hog wallows/vernal pools appear with rain and disappear with a season’s dry heat.

Hard pan, clay pan, mudflow, trap water.

*** 5/15/15

Birds know to fly, to sit, to peck. Go and arrive and go. It’s complicated, this living. So I go and arrive and set my sights on less. Less is more. Walking where the sage and encelia send out their clearing scent.

*** 5/16/15

Washington Governor Jay Inslee has declared the state is in drought, and Oregon Governor Kate Brown has declared seven counties are in drought.

*** 5/16/15

Walked with a neighbor through the canyon behind our houses, looking for what natives are growing there. At this time of year, the wild grasses would typically be high and turning or already golden. My shoes and socks would be cluttered with burrs and foxtails. But now, there were no grasses. No grasses! Just a little in wet spots, just covering the ground, not reaching up. Most of the ground was just bare dirt.

*** 5/17/15

Four years of drought has lowered Shasta Dam's reservoir in half. Hydropower in California is now supplying just 8% of the state's electricity, and in normal weather years it is still a smaller provider than other sources at about 11%. The trend is to move away from the current main energy source, natural gas, because it is costly and polluting, and to have more solar and wind power plants.

*** 5/17/15

Too much wanting in this land of plenty, and too much unhappiness in these fields of abundance.

*** 5/18/15

An oil pipeline has broken in Santa Barbara near Refugio State Beach. Plains All American Pipeline supplied a pipe that did not have an automatic shutdown valve. Their pipe was the only one in Santa Barbara County to not have the safety valve. The company has a notorious record of oil accidents, and 175 Federal citations of safety infractions.

Some of the obvious effects of the spill appear in the injured or dead large species, such as pelican and seal, but reach all the way to the very small ocean floor organisms. Scientists say the disaster will have damaging fallout for decades.

*

Farmers in riparian areas of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta are going to voluntarily reduce their water usage by 25% or reduce a quarter of their crops.

*** 5/23/15

Those four little girls got up in the morning, got dressed, and went to Sunday school. They knew Jesus died for us all, to give us more love and faith. They didn't know they were going to their own special date with God.

Innocent. Dressing into their choir robes, to sing to Jesus. And the bomb sent them right away to Him.

*** 5/23/15

In the San Joaquin Valley, Tulare Lake dried up a hundred years ago when its water was drained for agriculture.

The southern Central Valley is drier and hotter than the north, and though both the north and south may grow some of the same crops, the south uses a lot more water both from the aqueducts and groundwater. Currently, there are no limitations factoring in water needs for what crops may be grown in either the north or south.

*** 5/24/15

It's a long story with many parts. Here's some of it.

Sati had married Shiva.

Backstory: Sati's father, Daksha, had a grudge against Shiva. He had received a garland of jasmine flowers from a rishi who had received it from the Divine Mother. That night, Daksha got intoxicated from the garland, and he had said mean things to his wife. In the morning, he felt so bad about it, he blamed Shiva, because one of Shiva's names is Pashupat, Lord of Animals.

Daksha was going to start a new creation, and he had invited everyone but Shiva to the sacrificial ceremony. From her home on Mt. Kailash, Sati could see everyone going to her father's house. She asked Shiva to go with her, but he refused. She went, and she asked her father why Shiva wasn't invited.

Daksha said, He's worthless, and may I remind you that you were not invited either!

So Sati sat down and left her body to place her soul in heaven.

Shiva instantly felt bereft of energy, his Sita. He rallied his forces of ghosts and goblins to go to Daksha's house to stop the ceremony. Mahakali and Virbhadrā succeeded in putting out the fire—and they beheaded Daksha.

But Vishnu and Brahma pleaded with Shiva to restore the fire and revive Daksha so that the next creation could begin. So Shiva did so because he forgives easily.

Yet, then he lifted Sati onto his shoulders, and danced his grief, and his dance was causing the demise of creation.

The goddesses and gods pleaded to Vishnu, Please stop Shiva! Please save the world!

Vishnu used his bow to cut Sati's body into fifty-one life-giving pieces, because she is pure energy. Those pieces fell one by one from Shiva's shoulders out and about on earth.

Shiva stopped dancing and began searching for Sati's body, piece by piece. Each time he found her, he would sit and meditate. In India, even now, there are the fifty-one Shakti Pithas, temples of the Divine Mother where a piece of her fell, and close by, is a Shiva temple where Shiva meditated.

Shiva then was out on this search, deeply immersed in his meditation, naked, because he wasn't attending to his clothes or appearance, and he stopped at a village well, and asked the young women there for a drink of water.

Not sure what to think of him—someone to fear or pity—the women ran away. Hearing of this, the Brahmins of the village came and scolded Shiva and cursed him, May your lingam fall off!

And it did. Because of this, all passion and motion stopped—the relationship of sun and moon's circular dance stopped, all couplings stopped, including plants with insects. No flowering or fruiting. Including humans giving offerings to the goddesses and gods.

The deities wondered what had disrupted the natural order. And they couldn't provide rain without receiving the offerings. And not being able to give rain would mean that soon all that grows on earth would die. All, on earth and in heaven, would perish.

*

Tarakashura/Illuminator of Duality was doing extreme tapasya/self-sacrifice. And so it was that Brahma appeared and offered the granting of a request.

Tarakashura asked, Please allow me to be immortal.

Bhrama said, I can not grant such a wish as it goes against the laws and cycles of nature.

So Tarakashura thought he could get what he wanted anyway, he just had to get his request worded in trickery: Let me, please then, die by the hands of the son of Shiva.

Brahma said yes to this wish.

Tarakashura took over ruling the earth, and then he went to heaven and deported all the deities to earth. He insisted that he was ruler of the three worlds, and he would be the sole deity to be worshipped.

In great consternation, the goddesses and gods gathered and counceled. They needed Shiva's and Sati's bodies restored in order to save the world.

They went to Shiva, and pleaded, Please, please restore your lingam!

He said, Let me remind you that it came off because of a curse. I will agree to your request, but in turn I ask that everyone first make offerings of milk, ghee, and honey to the lingam, along with devotional songs and worshipful chanting, and to do this for a full night. Then I will be intact again.

And, although I will be restored, please do this Shivaratri ceremony again, all through the night, for one night each year.

And so all the gods and goddesses did as he instructed. And so, once more, all existence was blessed with being a part of creating and recreating life.

*** 5/25/15

The Escalade is a mega-recreation facility proposed for the Eastern Rim of the Grand Canyon/the western part of Navajo land that will include a gondola for taking tourists 3,000 feet to the canyon floor, to the confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado rivers. This area is sacred to the Navajo; their Holy Beings reside there, and their relatives of plants and animals, and the unique habitat for these species. It is sacred also to the Hopi, their sipapu is there, where their first people came up from the Third World/the underground, and it is where when they die, their spirits rest.

And the Zunis' creation spot is up the Little Colorado, where they regularly give offerings to their ancient shrines and to the Zuni River, which connects to the Little Colorado. They, like the Navajo and Hopi, consider the confluence of the two Colorados sacred, connected to their people's origin.

The National Park Service is opposed to the proposed venture, and says the Park boundaries extend over the proposed project's canyon rim area. In addition, no comprehensive aquifer assessment has been conducted, but it is highly likely the water table would be unable to sustainably support the business.

*** 5/25/15

Taylor Branch says he wanted to know what made people in the Civil Rights Movement walk into the danger. And he wanted to know what changed King from preaching/talking about the issues but steering clear of going onto the front lines to being an active participant. Risking the discomforts. Changing the story.

*

The deities asked Sati to be born again and marry Shiva again in order to give birth to a son who would conquer Tarakashura.

And so it was Sati was reincarnated as Parvati in the house of Himalya and Menaka. As an infant, her first word was "Shiva." She learned the sixty-four arts. And she practiced challenging tapashyas/spiritual practices to demonstrate her sincere intention to marry Shiva, such as meditating while sitting on a glacier.

*** 5/27/15

The strange rain of May, making it the month of water, the odd child of ninety dry Mays.

*

This month, San Diego has had its wettest May in 94 years because of an upsurge of El Nino. El Nino is warm Pacific water in the equator that affects global weather. It can also create very dry seasons.

*** 5/28/15

Swamiji says he forgets his own self-realization. The veil of maya/attachments and identifications is so strong.

*** 5/30/15

The idea of damming Lake Mead was presented by Herbert Hoover, U.S. Commerce Secretary, and technical advisor Arthur Powell Davis in 1922. They asserted that inflowing Colorado River water would serve the needs of seven western states far into the future. There was no plan for coordinating the different water-use interests of agriculture and cities as well as environmental needs, and now with the drought, this is urgently needed.

*** 5/31/15

Organic farmer and writer David "Mas" Masumoto reduced his water usage, because of the drought, on some of his crops by as much as 50% and discovered he had produced a small, but deliciously flavored peach. He says the charge that California agriculture businesses are using 80% of water is not accurate: it is 80% of developed water but much of the water for crops is from undeveloped water; he asserts the developed water comprises 40% of the overall. What is happening with water in this time of drought has all the elements of a story, and it is clear that Governor Brown is a central character and other voices are emerging from farmers and environmentalists, and time will tell who will be the good and who will be the bad characters.

*** 6/4/15

A study by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration confirms that the surface temperature of the earth has been steadily increasing since 1950. This study clarifies and overrides a smaller sample from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that had found that there had been a downturn in the temperature rise from 1998-2012.

*** 6/5/15

Democrat and Republican congressional representatives from California are arguing over water being protected for endangered fish or being used for agriculture.

*** 6/6/15

The Santa Ana River Watershed Project Authority, SAWPA, was formed after a lawsuit was filed by 4,000 parties within Orange County's Water District, disputing the use of the river's water by other districts upstream. The SAWPA coordinates water usage by Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties. They monitor the watershed's purity, and they fund recycling desalination and the purchase of property to promote aquifers. The Authority has been very effective and could be a model for counties throughout the state.

*** 6/7/15

Misery leaking and lurking everywhere, and the break-down of the dishwasher, and the mystery of glitches of my computer software. It's all more than I can comprehend.

In every age, I'm told from the ancient yogic story, there are seven beings who ascend to heaven and become the Milky Way, and they are protecting us.

*** 6/4/15

Heat is the backdrop, the foreground, the central character, the ever supporting character, the beginning, middle, and end, the hidden revealed, the generations of the sun.

Now we get what we had before the strange cool May and heavy rain. A June unlike our usual cooler Junes. Every day the news tries casting the sky into its classic script, but the sky won't be typecast.

*** 6/8/15

Wanting it to be the same as always, to have and have and have without giving back, without looking at what is now. As if water could be bought, just that, could be owned. Could be made to stay put. As if forever could be possessed.

The resolution to want less is to be willing to be without. Didn't this land get taken with some good and lots of twisted intentions? We can remember to give something, to give flowers or cornmeal or flour, burn sage, say thank you. Little parts in the big part, each of us. Each of us and together able to give from receiving so much good even in the thickening destruction.

*** 6/9/15

City park trees are dying from the drought. City parks are 5% cooler than their neighborhood. This brings attention to water use for trees, and as some die, replacing them with drought tolerant species.

*** 6/12/15

Federal money is being given to California to aid farmers, laborers, and their communities that have been affected by the drought.

*

The California State Water Resources Control Board has ordered a stop to the use of river and stream water by growers and irrigation agencies. The stop also is being applied to the oldest users whose claims originated in 1903. Typically, these users are the last to be required to reduce use since they have senior rights.

*** 6/13/15

Ganga was the daughter of Krishna and Radha.

Brahma gave King Sagar a boon that one day Ganga would come to earth to be a river, a river that washes away people's sins, and she would be his wife. It did not come to pass in Sagar's life as a human. He was to be reborn as the ocean, and then Ganga would come. They would unite and in their merging, would cleanse and nourish earth.

Ganga herself would in turn be purified by the people who would sit beside her singing to God or invoking her when praying far from her banks.

And so it was that one day when Vishnu grew enormous—in another one of his adventures—Vishnu put one of his huge feet into Brahma's house in heaven. Brahma, following the welcoming custom of the day, poured Ganga's water from a pitcher over Vishnu's foot.

This started Ganga's descent to earth. She passed through the Big Dipper, a constellation of rishis, and they tried to slow her down, but she rushed right past them. She rushed on past the North Star and all the celestial deities. They all implored Shiva to save earth from the certain calamity caused by her falling hard onto earth.

Merciful Shiva, ever listening to our prayers, put himself into her flooding path and allowed her to fall on his head, and by this make the flow of her descent slower, falling through his hair.

As prophesied, she purified the earth and its people with her waters. And she set free the souls of 60,000 sons of King Sagar who had been reduced to ash from a curse.

At last, she completed her journey, having made her course through the land, to her place of meeting and uniting with the sea.

*** 6/15/15

The businessman said to me, I always say, if you put me on a square of beach sand, even there, I would start moving it around, looking for some parts from other parts, to sell, to be productive. He said, You can make a living, earn money out of any thing, any place.

Later, I thought, if I was there in that square, I would walk and sit, considering it, its many meanings, its spiritual gifts. I would pray there with it, to it, for it. I would sing or write a poem. I would thank it.

*** 6/16/15

June 17, 2015, Charleston, South Carolina: A man crazed with hate attends a Bible study at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. He shoots and kills nine members.

*** 6/19/15

Wind moves in, through the partly open window in the hot night. A good stirring. Mid- June, mornings sometimes typical, greyed in with sea's in-reaching shroud. But many days complete escapers of the wild blues.

Word has it even the old-timer landholding farmers have to let go of what they had so long used as if it was theirs.

They are us. We want to keep the way we've used water. Maybe faucets as we've known them are outdated. Maybe most of us are lethargic, still in our past.

Let go, the voice is saying, let go, let go. Everywhere it is echoing.

*

10,00 acres have burned in the San Bernardino National Forest. The drought has made forests more susceptible to fires.

*** 6/19/15

Sita, the survivor. She'd come back from being captured and imprisoned by Ravana. Was home only briefly. Because the people considered her less than pure since she'd been touched by another man, the one who had kidnapped and imprisoned her. Sita told Rama she would separate herself—again—from him. She could see his shame and the discord throughout the kingdom. He was the king and he had to put aside his personal desires and sacrifice all for his people and the higher values.

She went to Valmiki's ashram in the forest, and stayed there where she bore Rama's twin boys, Lav and Kush. As they got older, the sons said to anyone who listened that Sita should be allowed to live once again side by side with her husband, Rama, and that they, too, would be there, ready to be heirs at the proper time, to the throne.

Rama said one day, Bring her back so she can testify that these men are our children.

Sita was summoned and she said to the people, I have been faithful; Lav and Kush are our children.

She asked the earth three times to open up and liberate her from her earthly body—if she was telling the truth.

And after the third request, she said, Rama is the best of men because he cares for the welfare of his people. I will return each time he returns to earth, to be his wife.

The earth shook and split and Sita's body was taken in.

*** 6/21/15

The Interfaith Prayer for Rain gathering in Chino was attended by 500 people of different religions.

*** 6/21/15

There had been the incident of the washerwoman.

This was when Sita was still living at the palace.

The washerwoman had come into town to do some shopping, and at dusk, when she was ready to cross the river and go home, it had started to rain, to rain hard. The boatman said he could not possibly risk a crossing in that storm.

So this is why the washerwoman went to the king's palace—to ask for shelter. But the guards told her it was late, the king and queen were resting and could not be disturbed.

So the woman went away. After she spent the rainy night at the ferryman's house, she was ferried over the now calm river and made it home. But her husband had not even an ounce of pity or compassion—he had already made up his mind that she had been unfaithful, and he told her she could just go back to whoever it was she had been with.

When Rama heard of this the next day, he was upset. His duty was to protect all his citizens. He went out to the village, disguised as a citizen, to hear what the people were saying. People were upset that he had not been able to give the poor woman a safe place to stay. He was so caught up in Sita being home again after her imprisonment, he wasn't paying attention to his job as their king. And what's more, they said, Sita, like the washerwoman, had been unfaithful.

So Sita said to Rama that she must go away. His first duty was to his citizens.

As she left, she said to Rama that her prayer was that in future lives they would be together and not encounter such hardships.

*** 6/22/15

Mono Lake has only two more feet that it can drop before it is officially considered at risk as a link for the Eastern Sierra ecosystem. Although the Department of Water and Power has reduced its usual draw of water by two-thirds, it may soon have to completely stop. Concerns include the access by an exposed land bridge to Negit Island where seagulls nest, increased dust storms that endanger health, and the overall environment impacted. In addition, the draining creeks are very low and are putting at risk trout, vegetation, and migrating birds.

From a series of lawsuits presented by environmentalists, the DWP was ordered in 1983 by the U.S. Supreme Court to reduce their diversions from the streams. In 1994, the California State Water Resources Control Board set minimums for the streams' diversions and the level of Mono Lake. This year, the DWP dammed the Los Angeles Aqueduct to comply with this and to mitigate the dry Owens Lake.

*** 6/25/15

Los Angeles Department of Water and Power sent letters to 4,600 homes of high level water users asking them to reduce their use.

*** 6/26/15

Los Angeles Catholic Worker Jeff Dietrich visited Julian Assange at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, where he has been confined for three years in political asylum and unable to obtain his visa after his involvement in publishing Chelsea Manning's leaked military documents in *Wikileaks*. Lawyers defending him and *Wikileaks*, filing a Freedom of Information Act Request, have been unable to see any of the indictment documents from the U.S. 4th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Assange still encourages all of us, in the face of increased limitations of freedoms, to be activists. He says, If we do nothing about it, then we lose the ability to protect the ones we love, and finally we lose the ability to protect ourselves.

*

Sr. Megan Rice, Michael Walli, and Greg Boertje-Obed had broken into Y-12 National Security Complex in 2012 to decorate the building that houses enriched uranium with peace messages and symbols and to conduct a prayer ceremony.

The Department of Defense first charged them with the Sabotage Act. But in their legal appeal "was whether the Sabotage Act applies to non-violent peace protesters who do not damage weapons. The government insisted that the defendants had 'interfered with national defense' and therefore the conviction should stand. Circuit Judge Raymond Kethledge asked the prosecutor, 'With a loaf of bread?'"

(Wisniewski, Mike. "Transform Now Plowshares: Authentic Heroes." 5. *Catholic Agitator*, June 2015.)

*

The Department of Defense is viewing climate change as a factor in security with such problems as the spread of climate-related diseases and sea changes.

*** 6/26/15

Ravana, after doing great austerities, had won the boon from Brahma to rule heaven and earth.

At that time, he was mean and merciless, and in fact, lived up to his name's meaning, "to make the gods cry."

Lakshmi had come to earth as Vedavati. She was in the forest, singing hymns, when one day Ravana was traveling through. The moment he saw her, he wanted to have her as a beautiful treasure at his palace. He rushed forward, grabbed her by the arm, and told her, You must come with me! I am the ruler of all heaven and earth, and I must have you at my palace.

Vedavati defiantly said, No! I do not want your impure touch nor your adharmic ways. Not only will I not go with you, I also will not stay on this earth in this body. And when I am born again, I will destroy you.

And just like Sati choosing her body's demise, she went into the inner light of her meditation, so bright it left her body to the purity of ash.

*

Ravana demanded taxes from every being in his universe. The rishis, of course, could not pay, since they were renunciant monks. They said, We only have the blood running through our veins and arteries.

Ravana pitilessly said, I'll take it!

So the rishis put some of their blood in a box and gave it to Ravana's servant.

Ravana's wife, Mandodari, though she was told to not open the box, because of her curiosity, did open it, and even tasted the blood.

The minute she put her blood tipped finger into her mouth, she became full term pregnant, and then and there delivered the baby. It was a girl. She had to hide all that she'd done, so she put the baby into the box.

The servant who had handled the box told Ravana that the rishis had attached a curse to their taxation blood: wherever the blood would go, there would be drought. Upon learning this, Ravana ordered his soldiers to travel to the peaceful kingdom of Janak and by night's cover, to bury the box underground.

Now, King Janak was a very good person. And when the box was buried in his land, the entire kingdom plummeted into a severe drought. Everyone had to be extremely careful with what little

water was on hand from diminished springs and reserves. They took very short baths; they saved their cooking water for their now tiny vegetable gardens; they used cooking water more than once; they cleaned their dishes without water first and then used a miniscule amount of water for the rinse; they cleaned the floors just once a month.

The Brahmin priests told the king that he must make a special offering of work and material offerings to bring rain. It was in the midst of these prayerful offerings that King Janak was ploughing a field. He was demonstrating good faith for the coming rain. There he was under that dry, glaring-eyed sky, when his plough stopped, would not budge. The sit/the plough head, was jammed by what he figured must be a large stone. But then, as he dug with his shovel, he saw it was not a rock, it was a box. And when he opened the box, there was a baby girl, none the less for the time of her confinement, breathing and rosy-cheeked, smiling. He adopted her then and there, this daughter of the earth, and he named her Sita, she who is from a plough head, and she who is a furrow. And it was then that the sky clouded and sent down nourishing rain.

*** 6/29/15

Governor Brown has asked California cities to reduce their water use by 25%. The State Water Resources Board says that in comparison to May of 2014, water use in May of 2015 was lowered 29%.

*** 7/2/15

Sky goes on having a mind of its own. All that rain in May then heavy grey, immersions of edgeless clouds, just smidgens of wet, as if to be fog. Then a few weeks into June, it changing to the same but different, the damp particles moving through our skin, taking the territory as if it could turn to rain. Every day warming up and testing our faith that this condition is temporary.

And one day the grey shifted to black. I thought it must be an eclipse. I searched the internet and found nothing. The sky rattled. Soon there were tappings of drops. Then the gathering descended, heavy and sure. And split with its own ferocious quick-flashing lightning light.

You wouldn't know that character unless you'd seen it. By late day, the sky was sleek blue and hot.

*** 7/3/15

Lake gone to ground, pond still just a bit-pond from its spring.

The start of something big is something small.

Up here on the mountain, vibrant meadows, mostly green pine. Its own world coming through days of little rain, having done this before. Underground, there's water running free, small and large joining.

*** 7/4/15

Because these mountains are used to the dry years, because they may or may not get rain or snow, because the springs are not overtaxed with bordering homes—the meadows are thriving in their treasures. Green! In July—in a drought year!

*** 7/5/15

In his lengthy meditations, Narada had been able to surpass the powers of the God of Love as well as Wind, Rain, and Fire.

He was so pleased with his accomplishments that he just had to go tell Shiva. Shiva told Narada to not tell Vishnu/Infinite Consciousness.

But sure enough, the next time Narada went to see Vishnu, his guru/teacher, he blurted out what had happened, and said, Aham Brahmahmi, I am God!

Vishnu said, Ok, ok. I want you to go to earth now, and share your knowledge. Go on now.

So Narada was on earth, and he met a princess, Vishvamohini, who he instantly fell in love with. He asked her father, King Silanidhi, for her hand, but the king said Narada would have to come to the suitor ceremony and see if she would choose him among all the others.

Narada was certain that he would be chosen, and he knew she was so special, more special than any other earthly woman. She would be the suitable divine wife. Just to be sure there would be no mistake, he asked Vishnu to make him irresistibly handsome.

Ok, ok, Vishnu said. She sounds perfect. Just remember, as wonderful as this romantic love is, it is not the same as divine, unconditional love. Remember who you are. Ok? So I will help you be the most special suitor tomorrow. Ok, so you go on now.

So there Narada was, standing among all the eager men, and he certainly was special. Of course, he was so confident, so proud because he knew not only had he reached the status of supreme divinity, but he also was so incredibly attractive. What he didn't know, however, is that Vishnu had given him a monkey face.

Vishvamohini, carefully walking with her garland of flowers in her hand, stopped in front of each suitor, but when she got to Narada, she moved away immediately.

Two servants of Vishnu, Shringi and Bringi, posing as suitors, laughed. They said to Narada, Come on outside, brother. Let's go to the pond, and you'll see what's so funny!

Narada was horrified that Vishnu had played such a mean trick! He took a handful of water and threw it with a curse.

Vishnu! Because of your cruel trick, you must come to earth and suffer the pain of being separated from your wife! And monkeys will be your friends! And you! Shringi and Bringi! You two stay on earth as demons!

Vishnu accepted his curse and incarnated as Rama. But Shringi and Bringi told Vishnu that they were very upset at this turn of events. Vishnu told them that choosing to be born as demons this next lifetime, they would live short lives, and would return to heaven quickly. And so it was that Bringi manifested as Kumbakarna and Shringi as Ravana.

Narada very quickly became heartsick about cursing his beloved Vishnu. He asked for forgiveness. And Vishnu said, ever loving, You didn't do anything. This is what I did with you because I need to go to earth to purify it. You are just the instrument to make that happen.

*

Ravana was a king, then. The Shiva lingam, the stone given by God to earth for devotees to worship, had gone underground.

Ravana went to the Himalayas, to Mt. Meru, to appeal to Shiva. But Shiva was hiding from him. Ravana sat down and chanted and sang, and still Shiva did not come. Ravana made a hawan kund/a sacred pit and fire, and went on chanting, offering puja.

At this time, Ravana had ten heads. He decided, then, to cut one head off and give it as an offering to the fire, as an offering to Shiva. When Shiva did not appear, he cut off another head. And another and another. He was down to his last head. He knew his kingdom, his very life, was worthless without Shiva, so he decided he would go ahead and cut off his one remaining head. And just as he raised his bloodied hand with the ax, Shiva appeared and said, Stop! I love you! I accept your offerings!

Shiva gave Ravana a lingam to take home to the kingdom.

At this time, Ravana was still very proud and Shiva wanted to help him by giving him another challenge.

Ravana was walking through the forest heading home, and he had to go to the bathroom. A young cowboy was coming by, so he asked him to hold the sacred lingam, and to make sure the lingam did not touch the unsanctified ground.

As the young man stood there, the stone lingam became bigger and bigger and heavier and heavier until it was impossible to hold. When it landed on the ground with a thud, the young man jumped up onto his horse and galloped away.

Ravana came back and saw the lingam, so huge now. He shouted, Shiva! What are you doing! Ok! You don't want to come now?! Ok! But one day you will!

*

Rama and his half brother, Lakshman, went with Rishi Vishvamitra to fight Ravana's demon army.

King Janaka was having a syambara/suitor ceremony for his daughter Sita. Vishvamitra took Rama and Lakshman to Janaka's palace, where they were welcomed as guests.

The next day, Rama was sitting in the garden when Sita came walking through on her way to the temple. When they saw each other, they knew they were eternal partners.

For the syambara, the suitor had to lift Shiva's bow. Each man tried, but the bow would not budge. Vishvamitra said, Ok, Rama, you go and lift the bow.

Rama easily lifted it, and so it was that Rama was the one suitable match for Sita. And Lakshman married Sita's sister, Urmila.

Back at Rama's home of Ayodha, in a family dispute, Rama and Sita were banished to the forest for fourteen years. Lakshman and Urmila went with them. Wherever they were, they vanquished demons and learned wisdoms from the great saints.

At that time, Ravana's sister, Surpanakha, was causing many conflicts, and she told Ravana about Rama and Lakshman's feats, and about the beautiful Sita who could certainly be a treasure worth having.

One day when Rama and Lakshman were hunting, they pursued an elusive golden deer. They did not know that the deer was in truth Ravana's magician. But finally, having chased the deer for hours deep into the forest, they realized this was no ordinary deer, and so they headed home, fearing any other trickery that they might find there.

When they reached home, empty handed and tired, Sita was nowhere to be found. She had also been deceived by none other than Ravana, who had arrived there disguised as a sanyasi, a renunciant.

*** 7/5/15

When Shree Maa was six years-old, she stayed over the summer with her aunt and uncle. One day when her aunt and uncle were away, she was praying to the Kali statue, and she asked Kali to appear to her. She looked out at the garden and to her horror, she saw a big cobra with its head up looking at her through the windowless window. She ran into a bedroom, closed the door, and put towels in front of any crack she could find. After a few hours, she finally came out. She carefully walked outdoors and looked for the cobra, but didn't see it anywhere. She asked some neighbors to also help her look, but they also couldn't find it. Later that day, she got a fever and she felt like the snake was crawling on her.

Once when Shree Maa was 16, she wasn't doing anything in particular to get into a meditative state but when she sat down, she went right away into samadhi. She saw scenes from her life, she

says it was like watching TV, and then she saw the cobra, and then Kali appeared and told her that the light that she had been seeing when she was growing up was Kali, the Divine Mother. Shree Maa understood then that God takes many forms.

After this first experience, the light that had been next to her went away, and she went into samadhi often. She didn't remember Kali talking to her until later, when she started having devotees. And she didn't tell many of her life stories until much later when Ramakrishna said it was time, in 2006.

*** 7/8/15

Rama and his brother Lakshman searched far and wide for Sita and battled many demons along the way. In one of their battles, they released Gandharva, a rishi. He sent them to meet Mata Sabari at a nearby temple. Before Sabari's guru had passed out of his body, he had requested that she give Rama and Lakshman a message; he knew that they would one day visit her. The message was for them to go to Rishyamuka Mountain to meet up with Hanuman, the monkey saint, and King Sugriva, king of the monkeys. They would help them succeed in finding Sita.

After Sabari relayed the message, she left her earthly body and went to heaven. As instructed, Rama and Lakshman found their allies, and before they set off together to search for Sita, they joined their forces in vanquishing Sugriva's invaders. It was then the monsoon rains arrived, and so for the time being Rama and Lakshman had to stay put at Sugriva's palace.

But the time there became a blessing: Narada arrived and instructed them to perform pujas and homas as a navaratri/nine-day worship ceremony offered to the Divine Mother. He said she would undoubtedly be pleased and grant them their wish.

And so she did grace them with her appearance, and she said, Yes, you will most certainly find Sita.

So off they went, accompanied by Hanuman, the half-monkey, half-human incarnation of Shiva, and the monkey army. They had to cross the huge sea to get to Lanka, where Ravana—and the captured Sita—were. Rama prayed with pure sincerity to Shiva for help. The army built a bridge over the ocean to Lanka, and Hanuman, with his delightful, playful faith, simply flew across the ocean. And they successfully conquered Ravana. Reunited with beloved Sita, they returned to Ayodhya, their homeland.

Not long after arriving home, Sita was pregnant. Rishis came and gave their blessings and imparted wisdoms to the family. Rishi Agasthya in particular spent a good deal of time instructing them. He taught:

—Each person must find their truth, and the guru/teacher must not tell you that you can't find your truth. And the guru must share wisdom from their own personal experience.

—You will rise up, your soul will look, as if from a mountain top, at all your actions; they are really so small. You will see your past, your present and future, all of it, and you will see out past your challenges to the magnificent valley of peace.

—You ask what is the best course and worst to take with our lives. I tell you now: Don't cause harm and don't hate.

—What causes you pain is your own mind.

—To find your peace, find the saints. Being with them is like being both in the Ganga's sacred water and drinking it. The true saint cares for others and is not selfish, and shows how to live in loving awareness. Even if you cut down the sandalwood tree, even still, from its roots it releases sweetness into the air.

—In your search for the light, find it in love for God. If you find it in wisdom alone, you will still be seeking more light. If you play the role of the wise adult, you miss that embracing, encompassing loving light. In the heart of devoted love, there is no need for more attention other than from that one light. God protects you. You are her!

*** 7/8/15

San Diego Water Authority is questioning how much water and how affordable that water will be that will be supplied via Governor Brown's new delta tunnels. Just 2% of San Diego's water is currently being supplied by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. Most of its water comes from the Colorado River and local sources.

*** 7/9/15

When Sita lived in self-exile at the ashram with her sons, Rishi Valmiki taught the twin boys, Lav and Kush, the epic poem-story of Rama and Sita.

The people of Ayodha wearied of their lives without a queen and the depression Rama suffered because of her absence. They wanted the king to perform a fire ceremony to re-invigorate their community. It's true, they had peace, but still, they were feeling the need for more energy, an improved happiness.

Since a king must perform sacrificial ceremonies in the presence of his wife, and King Rama was no longer with Sita, there was a lot of gossip about who he would marry.

When Rama heard what his people were saying, he had a golden statue made in the likeness of Sita, and he put it next to his ceremonial seat. He wanted everyone to know that his heart belonged to Sita, his eternal wife.

As Rama's rishi, Vasishta would present offerings to the sacred fire. And he decided to send another offering by way of a white horse who would go out with some of Rama's soldiers to

surrounding countries with a message attached to his crown, saying, Ayodha is the supreme ruling country and all must bow to its peaceful rule.

None could argue with the message; they all had known peaceful accord with their neighbor and had heard of only good.

When the horse had reached Valmiki's ashram, Lav and Kush were there in the forest playing, and they took the horse while the guardians were napping. When the soldiers awoke, they insisted that the boys give the horse back. The boys refused. They said, The only person we're giving the horse to is its owner, King Rama. And we have a question for him.

Every person who approached to even try to get the horse, the boys put under a spell of sleep. Finally, King Rama came. They told him their question: Why aren't you with your wife? That is your honorable duty.

Rama said, As the king, my first duty is to my people. And the people had felt that Sita was no longer pure because of being Ravana's prisoner.

The boys exclaimed, The fault was not hers or yours! It's your people's! We give you your horse. Let us go back with you to Ayodhya and travel throughout the land to tell the true story to your people.

And so it was they recited the Ramayana story far and wide, and in this way the people realized their folly in casting unfair judgment on Sita. They had caused undue sorrow not only for their king and queen, but for all their fellow citizens as well.

The boys were saying, also, that they were the children of Rama and Sita. Rama then ordered the return of Sita so that she could publicly verify the royal lineage.

*** 7/13/15

I found out my badly stubbed toe is really fractured. The climb up and down a small mountain brought that realization—suddenly, my toe in incredible pain.

Swamiji tells us what we experience as a little pain or a lot in a lifetime depends on the way each person perceives it and deals with it.

*** 7/11/15

Late storms in May brought the water level up at Lake Mead, the Colorado River headwater, just when it was thought there would be a shortage to the rest of the year's supply.

*** 7/17/18

The Cajon Pass had a sudden fire on the surrounding hills yesterday, high winds aiding the rapid spread, destroying passing cars on the I-15 freeway and inland homes. People got out of the cars and ran to wherever they thought might be a safer zone.

*** 7/18/15

Early, in the morning dark, I am praying to the deities, and when I get to Kali, the sky rattles and lets go its big store of water, flings out charges of lightning.

After winter's hot, stretched and cracked ground, after spring's ashes, this night and day of gushing rain in summer.

*** 7/18/15

The Cajon Pass fire had taken 3,500 acres by the time the storm from Baja reached it today, the second day. The rain is helping the firefighters gain control.

*** 7/18/15

And this next day! Yes, more torrential, providential rain! Kali so pleased with our Navaratri prayers, this fourth day of the nine.

I see her in heaven dancing around, her feet thumping, shaking these rain heavy clouds. Something had to give.

It was clear blue and hot this morning, after an all-nighter rain. No use asking her what's next. Surprise! She kept steady with the heat, the persistent humidity, but was bringing grey in bit by bit, until by midday, the bright sky had dimmed down as if under an eclipsed sun.

And then the rain, strong and bold, started up again.

The rest of the day and all night!

*** 7/19/15

A few days ago, the eastern Sierras received a heavy summer hailstorm caused by El Nino. El Nino brings its tropical storm up from Mexico and Nicaragua into the southern United States. Too much rain and not enough snow in the Sierras and further north this winter will not add up to adequate mountain reserves of meltwater.

*** 7/23/15

King Maha Bisha had such a strong prayer life that he often visited heaven. Once when he was in heaven, he saw Ganga, and he couldn't take his eyes off of her. When Ganga realized he was looking intently at her, she turned to him, and they were in spellbound attraction.

Brahma said, Look, if you're going to get involved in this kind of thing, you may as well go to earth. We just don't do that here. There's no need for it.

King Bisha agreed, and sighing, took his leave, heading back to his castle on earth, where he would be King Santanu for his next earthly lifetime.

Ganga, too, set out for earth, but got waylaid by the eight Vashus brothers. The oldest brother, Dyau, had gotten them all into a mess of stealing Rishi Vashista's cow. Bisha's wife had asked them to help her; she thought it would be great to have the cow to help an ailing friend, because this sacred cow's milk made it possible to live 10,000 years in a vibrant, unaging body.

Rishi Vashista cursed the brothers, but he softened the curse when they said they were much less at fault than Dyau, the eldest brother, who was the instigator of the theft.

And so it was that the brothers were setting off to go to earth because of the curse, with the blessed condition that they would only have to stay a year and then they could come back to heaven. As they were heading out, they crossed paths with Ganga.

The brothers asked Ganga if she would agree to be the one to give birth to them, and she said yes.

And so it was, too, that she was King Santanu's wife, and she did all that a woman can do to birth a beautiful, healthy baby by eating nutritious food, getting enough rest, and taking walks around the palace grounds.

Shortly after her first baby was born, she walked over to the river and stepped into the shallow eddy, then set the baby down into the deeper, swiftly moving current.

The King, looking out from the dining room window, happened to see this. But he could not speak later to her about it. Men in that day and age did not involve themselves in baby and children affairs, nor could they acknowledge the facts of abortion and infanticide. Yet, he grew impatient and incensed as one by one, his rightful heirs were given over to the river.

When Ganga set out for the river with her eighth baby, King Santanu rushed out after her and said, Stop! I command you to stop right there! What do you think you're doing, drowning our son, our royal lineage?

She reminded him that they were here on earth for just a short time, to be romantic and for her to birth the eight cursed brothers, and she was releasing them from having to live a long human life, and now that she had fulfilled her duties here, she would go back to heaven, to their true home.

He realized that he had gotten caught up in the attachments of living on earth. So he agreed that she could now go. They would both leave behind on earth this last baby, the eighth.

He remembered when they first met here on earth. He was hunting near the Ganga River, and Ganga emerged from the river as an entrancing woman that he immediately fell in love with. She

knew who he was, but he was caught in the illusions of living on earth and so he did not remember who he had been and their relationship.

Then and there he had asked her to marry him. She told him they could but only if he would agree to the condition of always being supportive of her, to recognize her freedom to do as she pleased.

He said, Of course! Your happiness is my happiness! Why would I ever want to take that from you?

If you ever stand in my way, she said, I will leave you!

So here they were, and he had just broken his promise when he commanded her to not drown their baby. She reminded him of who he truly was, and that he was here to fulfill his karma of the curse that had been placed on him. And that she had been there to free the eight brothers from Vashista's curse.

She was quiet and then saw what she would do. She said kindly, Let's call this child Ganguya, Born of Ganga, and also Devavrat, Vow of the Gods. I am separating from you now and will stay on earth to raise him into manhood. Then you will reunite with him and I will return to heaven.

Devavrat received an excellent education from both Ganga and some rishis, and when he was grown, his name became King Bishma, King of the Lunar Dynasty.

*** 8/18/15

Senator Diane Feinstein says water issues are always contentious and the "hardest area from which to legislate."

"Nothing with water easily passes anything," Feinstein said. "That's just a given. This is the hardest area from which to legislate."

*

Even though it's been another very hot, dry summer, most cities have been following local recommendations for reducing water use; it's down by 25%.

*

Lake Oroville, which is the State Water Project's headwater reservoir, is extremely low.

*

10,000 firefighters working with over 20 wildfires, some caused from arson and some from storms, throughout the state.

*** 8/6/15

When I was in my 30s, one day water came out cloudy at the mountain café's faucets where I worked as a waitress. It smelled different. The manager brought in bottled water for us to serve to the customers. Well water, I was learning, just like when I lived in the backcountry of Oregon, is not necessarily pure and wholesome. There were high incidents of cancer and immune disorders in that rural area. Here, like there, it could be blamed, but not necessarily proven, on leaking runoffs from septic tanks and the local dump getting into the local water table.

*** 8/8/15

One day Ramakrishna told Maa while she was in samadhi that she and Swamiji had to go the United States to teach people how to live their daily life focused on God. When she told Swamiji what Ramakrishna said, he said he wouldn't go because the U.S. is a land deeply deluded by the maya/the state of awareness of materialism and selfishness. But when they finished their three month retreat and came back to the lowland, Swamiji was told by officials that he could no longer renew his India visa. It was 1983.

*** 8/9/15

A spring in an old, cemented basin and an ever-spouting faucet at the side of the winding Palomar Mountain road. You could stop there, still can, for drinking water. In the old days, you got water there for your radiator.

When I was a kid, we had a free-standing portable pool, called a Doughboy. The impress of summer's dessicating heat was relieved by a whole body immersion in that nine-foot circle of sun warmed water.

*** 8/9/15

Architect Frank Gehry proposes that stormwater be caught in the Los Angeles River and treated for municipal use, and to expand parkland surrounding the river.

*

More fires this year than last year have brought in firefighters from every U.S. state. High heat and winds are expected in a few days. Plants are drier much earlier than usual because of the years of drought, and it is hotter, and so fire behavior has been unpredictable.

*** 8/13/15

Shree Maa remembers that when she was very young Ramakrishna told her, You came again to earth! There is a lot that needs to be done in this age of darkness. You will show people how to live spiritually with a sadhana/practice, and how to be giving.

As was the custom, her mother Kayani, married by arrangement when she was young, at the age of 13, to a 20 year-old businessman, Sushil, who managed a tea estate. When Kayani was 14, they walked up the Kamakhya mountain, planning to visit the Kamakhya temple there. Before they reached the temple, the saint Swami Bhuvananda Saraswati met them on the path outside his Kalipur Ashram. He told them that he was expecting them, that Kanyani was going to have a divine child and he would give her the blessing of God with mantra initiation now. Kalyani was not aware that she was pregnant, but she did not refuse the offer from the respected and highly esteemed saint. He asked her to come again in two months for another blessing, which she did, and then she would come again when the child had turned two months old.

As an infant and child, Shree Maa was very peaceful and did not cry. Her mother spent her free time with the baby in their household shrine room, repeating and singing mantras, and she had to guess when to feed Maa because she did not fuss.

Shree Maa began making offerings to the sun when she was three and did her first Shivaratri fast when she was four years-old. By the time she was five, she was offering puja every day. She moved to the city Digboi to live with her grandmother at their large estate on the outskirts of town and to attend school. Her grandmother offered prayers not only in her morning and evening puja, but throughout the day. Maa learned to attach mantras to every activity as a way of life. She joined in sharing with her grandmother the housekeeping tasks which were many. Her grandmother was very particular about how they should be done, and would not tolerate being sloppy or slow. To this day Shree Maa encourages her devotees to be efficient in all their actions.

She considers her grandmother and Ramakrishna as her first teachers in this lifetime. When her housework was done, she would go out into the surrounding forests to visit the holy men/sadhus. Every year there is a 65 mile walking pilgrimage for Lord Shiva, the Sharvan Festival. The pilgrim carries two buckets of water balanced on a pole on their shoulders; the water is from the river near the Vashishta Temple. All the while, the pilgrim chants for three days Shiva's mantra, until they reach the Umananda Temple near the Kamakhya temple. Along the way, when she would stop for the night receiving a meal and a warm place by a fire provided by locals, she would listen to sadhus/monks. It was then she learned from one sadhu that knowing a holy person's name was much less important than being in their divine presence, and that in fact, learning any person's name was not as valuable as bowing to their divine essence.

*** 8/13/15

Spectral clouds move in from the east. Dry air snaps into an invisible film of moisture. No wind and then little puffs.

Going into shadow, going into the fade-outs of dusk.

Meaningful outlines appearing and dissolving.

Heat inhaled into the rooms. Cooker heat, in-dweller squatter.

The body as water emerges. Floating, suspended in its own waters.

Will lose this ocean if this goes on too long.

Now the creeks go into the sky, the lakes flatten to ground.

My blood needs the spring—there in the rocks, the giver still giving.

There at the sink's faucet, salvaged water from the labyrinth waters brought in their pipes.

We're told the stories of other dry times. If it has happened before, it can be lived with now.
Every story, though, having its rogue elements, its outlaw characters.

We could say the fires will be worse in these next few months than the ones we've ever remembered. Because they already are devouring more and faster and more crazily than we've ever known.

We could say other crops that can live on less water will be the state of the art.

But even as the senior water rights farmers have to give in to the mandates to cut back, they plan and plant their usual crops.

Does the sky listen?

Sky turns gold. We know it is not the same sky, not the same pattern of clouds.
But we know sky. We feel we know sky.

There should be no grass, but the wild grass comes through. Not every oak bows down to the might of the beetle.

There may be just enough time to make other answers besides the ones that have been in place all these changing years.

If I put the dire facts in their own growing list and took them as the only truth, the next morning it would be hard to get up.

Do we know all the facts?

The sky goes out past, far past what we know.

I believe in sky and water.
Ground and fire.

Who and what is here.

All of us alive and returned souls embraced by limitless sky.

So much bigger than our story of looking

for water.

*** 8/14/15

Environmental editor Dennis Dimich shows the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Conference images of high mountains throughout the world that no longer have glaciers or seasonal snow, and tells about aquifers everywhere that have dropped.

*** 8/14/15

Unless you are in the artificial coolness, you are in this overpowering heat. It slows the motions. The cat collapses in the crease of cement floor and brick wall, the strip of shade. Birds make brief morning song. The already plummeted lakes and reservoirs close in even more.

It had to be. It is August and we've just begun. Now the summer really begins; the cooker heat waves that will keep coming in until the beginning of November. That is, if we have anything like what we've known in the past. In general. But we know this last year, the waves never fully let up.

Then let the body do what it does, skin immersed in self-made water. Drinking water, but never feeling it's too much.

Three to one: if you drink from a new, sealed plastic bottle, it takes three bottles to make one. Its poisons takes another piece of good earth and sky.

Her voice inside me tells me: I have given you the earth and water to make all that you need. To be all that you can be. To learn, to ask questions. Always ask, knowing sky is not ever the same. Plant with what you learn, and gain from the losses.

*** 8/15/15

Shree Maa did well in school and college, and she organized community worship celebrations. She was involved in social service projects such as selling herbs to raise money for the poor and organized volunteers to take medical supplies to poor villages.

Once her schooling was done, she wandered throughout the Himalayas and countrysides, praying and blessing devotees. She ate little, and Swamiji says that in 1980 she weighed only sixty pounds.

A young woman who had leprosy came to Shree Maa for help with her suffering. Maa told her to go see a pujari/minister at a Durga temple in Parshuram Kund. The pujari told her to that she could stay with him and help him by cleaning the puja utensils. He had a reputation of being unorthodox, and his allowing the girl with leprosy to stay there further shocked the villagers. After some time of her devoted service and joyful worship there, her leprosy blessedly disappeared. One day a traveling World Health Doctor from America visited the temple, and he

and the young woman were attracted to each other. They ended up marrying, and she moved to New York with him.

*** 8/16/15

Water use has changed in California due to the series of droughts. The Inland Empire Utilities Agency remodeled storm drains to capture rainwater and uses desalination for cleaning runoff from dairies and steel manufacturers. The South San Joaquin Irrigation District provides an on-demand digitally commanded watering system for farmers so that it delivers water only when and how much is needed.

*** 8/16/15

Some wealthy devotees of Shree Maa had financed a pilgrimage tour around India for her to visit temples and give blessings. Their first stop was the Temple of Rameshwaram. When Shree Maa approached the gate, an elephant gave her a garland of flowers. She was allowed to go into the sanctuary that is not accessible to the general public, where she gave offering to the Shiva lingam. In ancient times, Ram had also given offerings here, requesting that he be successful in his battle with King Ravana who had kidnapped Sita. And she offered a gold covered bel leaf, just as Sarada Devi had.

As soon as she returned to her guest room, she told the devotees who were traveling with her that they all had to pack up because they were going back to Calcutta, where they had started the journey. The devotees were surprised but did as she requested. They took a train and arrived back in Calcutta in the middle of the night. Shree Maa then took a taxi to a specific house in the Lelua Railway workers' colony. She knocked on the door, and when the man of the house answered it, she walked right past him to where the wife was sitting. The woman said, I told my husband that you would come! I was not going to move until you came. He didn't believe that you are the Divine Mother! He has been telling me to get up, but I have sat here for two days, praying to you.

*** 8/20/15

The level of the ground in the San Joaquin Valley, Oxnard, Cuyama Valley, and Indian Wells Valley is sinking significantly due to pumping of groundwater. The groundwater is being pumped more because of drought conditions and reduced allowable amounts of delivered water.

*** 8/20/15

For some years now, a high pressure in the sky above the Gulf of Alaska has been pushing the western jet stream to the east. It is a contributing factor to the West Coast's drought and the blizzards on the East Coast.

*** 8/22/15

Let there be light, let there be dark, and let there be all the greys. Let there be flowers to inspire, to amaze. To remind.

They say there have been droughts before. But I've always had water. Even when living outdoors.

Thanks must be tended.

Smoke curls out of other mountains.

More nights continuing these days' heat.

Two birds zing, glinting in the twilight, into their bush for the night.

Cracks, from the ground dropping, appear in the aqueduct, sinking into the dry places where there had been groundwater.

We believer rain will come.

*** 8/23/15

When Vashista was a young man, he had a guru and he wanted to live a celibate life as a sannyasi, someone who lives simply, a renunciate. But his guru told him to be like a potato, to not worry about being a renunciate, that it comes naturally through spiritual evolution. He encouraged him instead to be focused on sharing unconditional, nourishing love for all beings. So Vashishta worshipped Kali in his home, and worked as an engineer for Indian Railways, and he married and had children. One day, he heard that Shree Maa was staying with a devotee, and he proceeded to bring her fresh milk from his cow every day. He made some changes to his altar, in accordance with a custom of which direction it was faced, since he had learned that his morning worship would be most harmonious if he faced south. He asked Shree Maa to come bless his new altar where he would give her homage, and to stay as a guest. She accepted, and he presented to her a very devotional ceremony. After dinner, just before Maa went to her room to go to sleep, she told him that she would need a lotus for her morning arati/offering of lights.

Vashishta wondered where he would find a lotus because it was already late in the evening. He could hardly sleep. After awhile of tossing and turning, he went and woke up his sons, and asked them if they knew of any place out in the countryside where he could get a lotus. But they said they weren't sure, and they couldn't do anything about it now because it was dark.

When it was time to get up for Vashishta's early morning puja, he went out for his morning bath in the pond behind his house. He suddenly felt an urge to swim down to the bottom of the pond, which he had never done before. He couldn't see and reached out his hand in front of him in order to know when he'd reached the bottom. When he found it, he also felt something, possibly a flower or roots, and he was able to take hold of it. And sure enough, when he came back to the surface, he realized, in fact, it was a lotus!

He yelped with joy, and the whole family and Shree Maa, awakened by his cries, came out to the pond. He said to Maa: You play with me! Here is your lotus for the pleasure of your arati!

Maa was pleased with his acts of devotion, and she gave a splendid arati to the altar, happily waving her lights and rare lotus.

*** 8/24/15

It was like this when I would start school in September at the convent. Searing heat, no air conditioning, my palms always sweaty. Hard to think, going over the text, going over the text, going over the text. . . . Always, the best time for vacation was at the end of August and all of September and usually into October—but that was when school was in session.

I still don't understand why this tradition prevails in Southern California.

*

My skin wet. The day changing dry to humid to dry. Clouds foaming up in the east.

There's work to be done, so I'm doing it. Keep going as if. To sit or stand and think, It's hot, it's hot, it's hot, does no good. Better to act as if this is how it always is.

*** 8/24/15

Shantana pined for Ganga and the son who was just a baby when they left him. He would sit on the bank of the Ganga River, watching the water move, nearly drained of his own ability to move.

It was many years of this same, seemingly untractable mood and mind until the day he was shaken by the sight of hundreds of arrows flying into the fast-moving river, collecting and building into a dam. Within minutes, the river was pooling behind the dam and just a small portion was allowed to go through the spillway. And then, to his utter astonishment, Ganga in her female form was there.

She said, I'm here to deliver our son Devavrat to you, as promised. See how skilled he is, such a fine marksman that he can control my river. He has learned many wisdoms from the rishis. Now that my duty is done, I am returning to heaven. But if ever Devavrat calls me in need, I will help him. And then she was gone.

Shantana was so happy that his kingdom, Hastinapura, would be so well cared for by his son when the time would arrive for him to assume the throne.

***8/29/15

Heat so intense, in waves, it rattles us out of complacency.

Marc Reisner calls rain here in the dry western U.S. landscape “godwater.”

*** 8/30/15

the spring
the trickle
the creek
the backwater
the eddy
the slough
the arroyo
the ford
the stream
the rivulet
the freshet
the river

the vernal pool
the puddle
the pond
the pool
the lake

the snow melt
the meltwater
the cascade
the waterfall
the cataract

the geyser

the sea
the wind-drift
the spoon-drift
the spray
the whirlpool
the wave
the ebb tide
the high tide

the lagoon
the estuary
the slough

the iceberg
the floe

the sprinkle
the drizzle
the shower
the rain
the hail
the downpour
the torrent
the deluge

***8/30/15

Ron Goode, of the North Fork Mono Tribe, says that going to a natural area to gather plants for food or medicine or to hunt deer requires giving thanks and offerings to rocks, plants, animals, and also the Old Ones, the ancestors and spirits. All of them can see and hear you, and your offerings open up your mind and heart, clearing them, so that you can be open to all that will communicate with you, and you will be able to see and hear them.

*** 8/30/15

Shree Maa was staying at the Bamangachi Railway Colony in Calcutta, and the area was very dangerous with gang warfare. The gang members did not hesitate to kill innocent people, including children. One day when Maa was with devotees meditating, a gang leader who was running from the police came in. Hanumandasgunda sat at the back of the room and thought that the police would not look for him there. Maa opened her eyes and looked right at him, and asked him to come up. A devotee brought Maa a glass of water, and just as Hanumandasgunda reached Maa, a fly landed in the water and could not get out. Maa asked Hanumandasgunda, Will you save him?

He immediately reached in, got the fly, and set it free.

Maa said, If you saved the fly, why don't you do that for the rest of us?

He started crying and bowed down to her.

After that, he did not want to continue his gang life. He wanted to be Maa's disciple and live with her, but she said he had to go work. She helped him get a job as a supervisor at an iron foundry.

*

Shree Maa decided to set up a large circus tent and hawan kunda/fire pit in a field in the Bamangachi Railway area. She started a nine-day worship, and she asked Hanumandasgunda to go ask the opposing gang leaders to come talk with her. When they arrived she asked, Will you protect the area so the worship will not be disrupted? And will you please not fight so loudly so we can give due respect to our worship?

Because they recognized Maa as a saint, they all agreed. As the days progressed, people from all faiths came to participate, and gang members also joined in. By the time the final arati/waving of lights happened on the ninth day, everyone sang and danced joyously together, and former enemies were hugging.

*

Hanumandasgunda's old gang connections came in handy on another occasion. Dr. Chakravarti had accidentally left his briefcase, wallet, and keys in a taxi. He got to work and realized his mistake and knew that in Calcutta, he had little chance of retrieving his things. He went to talk to Shree Maa, and Hanumandasgunda was there at the time. Hanumandasgunda said, I will find your things because I know all the thieves in town. The doctor wondered if this was possible in such a big city and it was full of so many thieves. But sure enough, when the doctor got to work the next day, his secretary told him everything had been returned.

Hanumandasgunda went on to found a school for low income children.

*** 9/9/15

Oh turning world, do our prayers turn you? Do our prayers for peace embrace you?

I look up at sky, breathe the good air, the plant incensed air. I would have given up if I had counted on really knowing cause and effect, the small on the big. I remember a poem fragment: people will be unkind, give anyway.

This morning, St. Teresa, The Little Flower, on my friend's wall, just stood there holding flowers and a big cross. She had bags under her eyes and just a bit of a smile. And was she, I wondered, as was the custom, enduring the jab of a little cross in her side? And did she, in that moment, know who she was, who she was becoming?

*

The seed does grow and still it dies again. I can not keep it from becoming something else besides its early beauty.

The man had been plastering the old apartment building all week. He told me today that the wood of the balcony porch was rotten and they weren't going to replace it. He'd plastered the wall all up and down from the first to the second floor, and he couldn't do any more. You could tell this is a disappointment to him, to do his craft on something that wasn't going to be fixed right.

Beginnings continuously going toward their endings.

It's warm and crickets are singing.

Over the ground planted with unknowns, the sun rises. And here is the crack in the road beneath my feet where I walk. Coyote appearing just for a moment in the early morning dusk. Out just a few miles west, trade currents making the sea so warm. My hopes tempered by unstoppable aging. Sky grey every morning, but later, becoming again its wash of colors.

Once in a great while, sun comes up unfettered, and the brush becomes lit up. Mercy is in the time between time, great stores of free peace. Why say bitter words, why trip on the slights? This morning a thrasher coming close, settling into song.

St. Teresa: I will seek out a means to heaven by a little way...for I am too tiny to climb the steep stairway to perfection.

*** 9/15/15

Most of the harnessed water in California goes to agriculture. It takes nearly 2,000 gallons of water to produce one pound of beef.

80% of water in California is used for agriculture
50% of California's agriculture goes out of state

*** 8/29/15

We don't see them in their country. And if we hear of them, we don't think they are us. You are not me. Your water is not my water. What's mine is mine. What's yours is yours. Your forests turned to deserts. Your thriving deserts with springs and rivers now depleted wastelands. Your icy homeland now covered with seawater.

*

She says in the poem-prayer, I am everywhere. I am in everything.

*

Is my cut knee from a snake? The little boy thinks so. Snakes bite, therefore, my cut knee is from a snakebite.

And the girl says, When dogs bark, birds fly.

An entire town is built on the steep mountainside in Turkey because a spring is there.

Horses in China pull their sled through rib-high snow every day. That is what they do.

*** 9/5/15

The Sonoma County Water Agency has been able to supply its 600,000 customers north of San Francisco from local reserved rainwater. They plan to use in the future renewable delivery systems and to improve the lush Dry Creek waterway.

*** 9/6/15

September now but it could be August. Rhythms of the dry leaves stirred by dry wind. No one knows, but predictions abound about sky and sea, what the currents will bring. Will we get what we want or not.

They say they are surprised about June's drop and July's even deeper drop in use; faucets were turned off, or the flow changed to dribbles. We can be part of the unexpected. Though we probably need to go further, do with even less.

But still there is water neurosis: Swimming pools for looks or rare use, thirsty gardens in arid lands. We want the soul connection but not the sacrifice.

Dudleya plants sprout wands of tiny flowers from their silver-blue rosettes. They live on spare rainwater and go dormant in the dry times. They've lived here in this way a long time.

*** 9/6/15

Heading up to see Maa and Swamiji, I would get a small free-way stretch only to have the illusion broken by more real traffic. I eventually got up over the Grapevine, traffic thinning out, and dropped down into the San Joaquin/Central Vaalley. It was twilight by then and hot, and there was a thick tawny fog.

According to the Tachi-Yokut Indians, the fog in the Central Valley is made by the ancestral spirits as a curse for the consequence of their people being murdered and displaced, and for the theft of water from Tulare Lake. Their people lived along the banks of the 30-mile lake for thousands of years; there were more villages here than anywhere else, and they lived peacefully because of the abundance of plants and animals and water. The mountains to the east and west, the Sierras and Coast Range, were made from the bottom of the lake, they said. Prospective farmers moved into the area in the western pioneer migration of the 1850s. At that time, Tulare Lake was the largest body of water west of the Mississippi. The four rivers feeding into the lake were diverted for crops, and by 1900 the lake was dry. At the same time the lake was being destroyed, the first California state governor issued an order to citizens to kill any Indian, not only men but also women and children. By 1856, a 25 cent per scalp bounty was offered as added incentive, and in 1860, the bounty was raised to \$5.00. It's estimated the Tachi-Yokut population in 1800 was about 20,000, but by 1860 there were only 600 survivors. They were forced off their land and required to send their children to federal schools where the students were not allowed to speak their native language. Raymond Jeff (Tachi-Yokut) says this genocide happening in California should be taught in schools as part of California history, to be as common knowledge as that of the Jewish Holocaust.

In 1921, James Boswell created his J.G. Boswell Company farmland, with the help of federal government funding, in Corcoran. To this day, it is the largest privately owned land in both California—and the world! He was given the rights to divert the four draining rivers to irrigate his crops and to farm the fertile lake bed. In 1934, the Tachi-Yokut were allowed to live in the area as a federally recognized tribe in the designated Santa Rosa Rancheria reservation. Forty people lived there “in tule huts, tin houses, old cars, and chicken coops. The average education...was third grade level, with field labor as the primary source of income.” A book about the Boswell family and business, *The King of California: J.G. Boswell and the Making of a Secret American Empire*, was published in 2005. Locals said that authors Mark Arax and Rick Wartzman got some things right and some not. Corcoran barber Ernie Corral told *The New York Times*, “Me and some other fellows were talking about writing a book ourselves about Corcoran. But if we did, we’d be run out of town or hung.”

The lake has returned a number of times due to floodwaters. It reappeared from the 1930s to 1945, and in the 1980s, both times destroying the cotton crops. In 1997, the Army Corps of Engineers channeled heavy rainwater that would have gone into Tulare Lake, diverting it north to the San Joaquin River. But the effort failed because twenty-two levees broke along the river, thereby flooding surrounding communities. Since then, there has been discussion about whether keeping water from a natural lakebed is really beneficial.

The good news is the Tachi-Yokut now run a thriving business, The Palace Indian Gaming Center, which has helped them also recover their culture.

*

Tule Lake was where 27,000 persons of Japanese descent were held in the maximum-security Tule Lake Segregation Center during World War II. And 12,000 of these people were considered “troublemakers” because they had publicly denounced the ten concentration camps around the U.S. that were incarcerating Japanese-descent people.

An airport was built in the 1950s on the Center’s former firebreak road. And at that time, the Bureau of Reclamation gave homestead lots for the area via lottery. But persons of Japanese descent living there were given \$25 dollars and ordered to move out of the area.

*** 9/7/15

There had been a number of years of drought in San Diego and so the City Council hired rainmaker Charles Hatfield to remedy the situation. As a result of his effort, the rain in January 1916 was profuse and led to the overflow of reservoirs and the breaking of Lower Otay Dam and eighteen deaths.

*

California recorded droughts:

1863-64 (After the Great Calamity Floods of 1862)

1928-34

1976-1977

1987-1992

2011-present

*

“In 1884, Riverside had the largest acreage of vines and trees of any of the colonies giving attention to orange and raisin culture south of the Sierra Madre. Yet no farther back than 1870, this valley, now so smiling and yielding such lavish returns to its cultivators, was but a silent waste, mantled in Spring-time with gay flowers and tall wild grasses. The soil is composed largely of disintegrated rock, washed from the surrounding mountains by the storms of ages, and possesses almost boundless powers of production. But these powers were dormant. Something was needed to arouse them, and that something was simply the voice of running water.” [From Emma Adams’ 1887 book, *To and Fro in Southern California with Sketches in Arizona and New Mexico.*]

*** 9/10/15

Earlier in the week, Flash Flood was allowed to take one man out of this lifetime and into whatever’s next.

It’s been days of overpowering heat—in the 100s. Strange spells, dry slate of sky then the black cloud buildup in the east over the mountains and bottling up in town. Skin persistently sweating, you could almost remember yourself as an ancient fish.

The eastern cloud gathering sets free its waters; they’re going, but still more is hovering held above here.

*** 9/10/15

Raj Patel:

We certainly live a life that’s out of balance. I imagine a Buddhist audience can relate to that. There is nothing more Buddhist than steering a course between self-denial and self-indulgence. It’s the Middle Path. Our life is out of balance because the systems that we’ve put in place are out of balance. If you’re earning less than a living wage, those systems have made it impossible to eat well and have the time to cook. And God forbid, have the time to savor food and be connected to the labor that produced it. If you don’t have that time or that money, then you are going to be knocked on your heels. Particularly if you have children, you’re going to feed them what you can afford and what’s going to keep them happy. You can feed your kids what’s good for them if you have the time and ability to do that. But if you don’t, then you might just keep them happy. Children’s happiness is an important thing. So if you look for the things that keep

children happy, salt and fat and sugar have great appeal. Food corporations have a lock on things that are high in salt and fat and sugar.

But high salt, sugar, and fat fracture children's bodies in a way that then makes it very hard in the future for those bodies to metabolize and to behave properly. ...People are being exposed to precisely the wrong kinds of food. Poverty really has an impact—it makes bodies more predisposed to develop metabolic syndrome. And, worse, what we're learning about epigenetics suggests that poverty and a poor diet harm not just the generation eating that food but the next generation too.

...Sixty percent of the people going hungry are women or girls. We live in a world that's sexist and patriarchal; it means men and boys tend to eat first. There's nothing natural about that, but it is the way that most of our human societies are structured today.

...Right now the way poverty is produced is through a system of capitalism that engenders deep inequality.

...The companies controlling the bottleneck from farmers to consumers have market power over the people who grow the food and over the people who eat it. ...power is concentrated in a very few hands. ...Historically we've had things like antitrust laws in the United States or antimonopoly laws. But governments are terrified to enforce those. That is something we can only change by making governments more terrified about not enforcing them.

In our documentary film, *Generation Food*, ...my favorite story...is about a village in Malawi that seems to have ended child malnutrition, this in a country as a whole where 50% of children are malnourished. [The village did] dry-land farming that works with nature where you're intercropping in various ways. The farms are rain-fed, not irrigated. ...When there is more harvesting to do because crops are more abundant, then breastfeeding goes down and children are undernourished. So these farmers figured it out, and changed the system—not only what to plant and how to get men to harvest, but also how to get men to cook. And when they got men to cook, breastfeeding resumed, children's welfare went up, household welfare went up. ...They have what they call "recipe days" where women and men get together to cook. ...Cooking stops being a taboo thing that men can't do and it becomes a contest that men and women can play. ...They want their kids to live long so instead of breastfeeding less, they change the cycle and breastfeed six months minimum and preferably longer. ...This change started in one village but now it involves five thousand farmers; it's spreading throughout the country.

If you're interested in practicing letting go of attachment, I suggest starting a campaign to outlaw marketing to children, targeting children who are born to attach. ...I think there's space for a collective Buddhism, a social movement Buddhism here. ...The self that Buddhist practice is designed to pierce through and deconstruct, that self is constructed when you start advertising to it, for example. When you start saying, "What you want, Self, and should want, is *this*," all of a sudden you've not just put a *this* in front of something, you've created a self that wants it.

"Changing Systems in a Hungry World: An Interview with Raj Patel." *Inquiring Mind* Fall 2014: 9. <http://www.inquiringmind.com>

***9/10/15

Heat that does not stop being hot. And power that must be saved; I remember how to do this.

The baby I am taking care of goes past being tired to being more tired, wants to sleep but her breath is so caught up in her crying. But the sound of singing reaches into her, and she finds spaces of calm between the sobs. I remember what I know by intuitive doing.

While Arjuna's family men were split into their two sides fighting to their deaths, where were the women, and what were they doing? Could they sit together and shake their heads at the foolishness of fighting? Could they cook together, watch their children play with each other?

They say rain came to the mountains. But from here, we have seen the great show of clouds in the east, white turned pink in the morning, turned black in the afternoon. We can pay attention to now, and that, Swamiji says, is devotion.

In the stories of ancient India, there was drought. There was exile into the desert when Arjuna and his brothers lost their rights to the kingdom. The times were moving away from what they once were. Kali Yuga, the age of darkness, came as a person, and Praikshit chased her away, saying, You can't enter here so long as I am king.

Krishna said to Arjuna, You're going to have to fight, but let me tell you how to have peace inside yourself.

They say in the story, God is acting in you all the time.

Cows stay grazing and resting in the mountain lakebed; there is the faintest bit of wet mud.

We have genetic memory, my teacher Richard Bugbee said. After massacre, after forced marching, after hunger and addiction, after arson and desecration, after the untold, yet we know.

*** 9/15/15

Extreme heat and then the sky filled in with gatherings of grey and black hanging water. Water waiting until two in the morning, starting in slow, pausing at daybreak, regathering midmorning. The ground darkened too.

Brave plants sighing and their sweet breaths, incense. We almost had forgotten what this is like. But for the sky's stint in July, but for May, the strange breaks in the ploughing heat. You could adapt, almost, but not quite.

*** 9/16/15

Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi says that the indifference people in developed countries have to people's suffering in undeveloped countries is a form of hatred. People in Bangladesh or Somalia

suffering from hunger or the aftermath of a natural disaster are experiencing the results of the oil business-political system and that system's "misinformation" that leads people of developed countries "into a shroud of complacency or a stance of denial."

*** 9/17/15

Rishi Parashara had given Satyavati, the daughter of a fisherman, the boon of having enduring beauty and an enticing perfume exuding from her body. After Ganga gave over Devavrat to the father, Shantanu, and left, Shantanu went hunting with his son and small group. He went further out on his own and soon reached the crossing for the Jamuna river where Satyavati was working as the ferry captain. He promptly fell in love with her and asked to marry her. She agreed and they went to her father, Dasraj, the fisherman, for his permission.

What an auspicious union! Dasraj said. Of course you can marry my precious daughter. But I ask that you make Satyavati's first son be the heir to your throne.

At this, Shantanu was shattered. I have my own son, Devavrat, by my marriage to Ganga, as the rightful prince, Shantanu replied.

So they were unable to reach an agreement, and Shantanu returned to his hunting party in the woods.

Every day, he went and sat behind a tree and watched Satyavati with longing. Every day, he returned to camp inconsolably sad, but telling no one, least of all his son, the reason why. And when pressed by Devavrat to return home to Hastinapura, after this growing absence, and the king clearly unhappy and not even hunting, Shantanu would say he still wanted to stay.

Devavrat one night asked Shantanu's chariot driver where they went each day. The driver said he was not at liberty to say. But Devavrat demanded the truth; as the royal prince, he could not be refused. And when he learned the whole story, he said, Although it is the middle of the night, take me to Dasraj. I would like to have a word with him as soon as possible!

And off they went through the dark night, and on arrival, awakened Dasraj. They talked about the problem, and Devavrat explained that his father could not dishonor the promise of the inheritance of the crown to Devavrat. But since Devavrat was the receiver, he then held the rights to the bestowal of the next in line for the throne. And therefore, he promised Dasraj, he would give the rule of the kingdom to Satyavati's son. He wished happiness for his father, to them both, and he said his father, like so many fathers, made sacrifices for his son, and now the son could make a sacrifice for his father.

But what about your children to come? Dasraj asked. Won't there be fighting over the right to rule the kingdom?

And Devavrat agreed. That is true. Therefore, I am adding another promise: I will not have any children. I will not marry.

Just as he said this, the earth quaked and flowers from the sky fell all about him. With that, he got into the chariot and rode back to the hunting camp.

When he learned what had happened and what could now be, Shantanu was beside himself with happiness. He was not only happy about being able to now wed Satyawati, but he was also very pleased that Devavrat had shown extraordinary respect.

Shantanu proclaimed: Devavrat's new name from this day forward will be Bishma, the strong one. He has demonstrated true strength, that of unselfishness, and high regard for the welfare of all, the true path of Dharma. I wish for him the blessing of passing from his body at a time of his own choosing.

To which Devavrat offered another promise: I will always defend the lineage of kings of Hastinapura.

*** 9/27/15

It was easy. The settlers ran over the land like a stranger they didn't need to know.

They saw weeds. They didn't know it was food, fuel, shelter.

*** 9/27/15

The path is dry before and soon after quick and heavy rain. Gold to green and back to gold grass, turning drier and drier, the goods for fire.

Under the huge ant hill, Valmiki has emerged from the poverty of his ignorance to the wealth of his repeating the name of God, telling us the *Ramayana*, wise poetic stories of sacrifice, the jewels of staying with when we have to be without.

*** 10/4/15

About the Valley Fire, a firefighter said: We were listening to the radio traffic and the air attack began like at 3:30 or 4 in the afternoon. And they said, "It's going to be at Harbin at nightfall." So that meant that it would be there like 8 p.m. That was like at 3:34.... Five minutes later he [the radio announcer] goes, "It's at Harbin!"

*

Almost 2,000 buildings and over 76,000 acres burned.

*** 10/24/15

After Shantanu had passed, Bishma's half-brother, Vichitravirya assumed the throne, and was in need of a wife. The three daughters of the King of Kashi at that time were about to hold the Syambara ceremony where they would choose their husbands among the attending suitors. But because of an old dispute, suitors from Hastinapura were not invited.

Bishma went anyway, and when his presence was about to cause a fight, he defeated all the attending kings by piercing their crowns with his arrows and landing them all at the feet of

the King of Kashi. He then took all three daughters to Hastipurna to wed King Vichitravirya. One of the women, Ambe, complained to Queen Satyavati that she had been going to choose King Salvyra for her husband, they were already in love, and she was outraged that she was now being forced to marry Vichitravirya.

Mother Satyavati told Bishma to have compassion and to order the army to deliver Ambe to her beloved. Bishma agreed, but when Ambe arrived, King Salvyra said he would not marry her now because he was disgraced by not being able to win the fight with Bishma. She'd been stolen away and now that could not be repaired.

So Ambe returned to Hastinapura. She was furious and she demanded that Bishma marry her since he was the one who had laid claim on her and severed her true love marriage. Of course, Bishma refused on the grounds of his vow to never marry. Ambe cursed Bishma, vowing to see to it that he would die, and then she left to go live in the forest and practice tapasya, a life of prayer.

*** 10/24/15

Water from the Alamo River will soon be diverted into a dry section of the Salton Sea, California's largest lake, to restore some wetland and offset the "fugitive dust" air pollution.

*** 10/24/15

Some scientists in 2001 went to study a huge iceberg, B-15, that had broken off in March 2000 from the Ross Ice Shelf. But because of adverse conditions, they ended up exploring other icebergs that had broken off from B-15. They dived with heated wetsuits under a glacier and found sea cucumber, anthropod, and detritus of other life left from the glacier scraping the ocean floor.

When they were leaving, a current wanted to keep them under. Fortunately, they were breathing their recirculated air; that's how they could stay so long. But their heating wasn't that warm in that icy water, and they were bone cold.

As grace would have it, they were released in a turning moment of the currents, and they rose up to the surface and their way out.

Just a few hours after they got into the boat, the glacier buckled up like a breaching whale into the sky, crashed back down, lifted again, and snapped again down, shattering like glass.

*** 10/7/15

When King Vicitravirya died of an illness while he was still in his prime years, he did not yet have an heir. So Queen Satyavati told Bishma, You must break your vow and sleep with both of Vicitravirya's widows, Ambike and Ambalike, in order to provide a legitimate heir right away.

But Bishma said he could not do this, A vow is not something to be broken, dear Mother.

Well, then, we must implore my elderly muni son, Veda Vyasa. Surely he will not deny my request. Please go find him in the forest.

Veda Vyasa was praying next to the Saraswati River, and he agreed that he could help remedy the situation. However, when the time came for Ambike to sleep with him, she was so appalled at his aged body that she kept her eyes shut tight. Because of this, Veda Vyasa later told Satyavati, the child, Drtarashtra, would be born blind. And when Ambalike saw Veda Vyasa, she turned white with fright. And as a result, Vyasa said, her son Pandu would be an albino.

Satyavati was then, of course, still worried about having a suitable heir. She asked the women to return to Vyasa, but they said they couldn't possibly bring themselves to return to him. But they, too, felt the problem of an heir must not go much longer unsolved, so they thought of a solution—they would ask their servant if she would go to him. She agreed and gave Vyasa utmost respect to which he said, Our son, Vidura, will be wise and just.

As the boys grew, Bishma taught them the dharmic way in all their skills. And once they were old enough to be ordained king, they stood before the queen for her to choose one of them. Upon Vidura's advice, she chose Pandu to rule Hastinapura. And he was, by everyone in the kingdom's account, a kind and fair ruler.

*** 10/7/15

Yes, it moves in again—every part of sky and room, shade or no shade, heated, ruled over by the intensity.

Rain early in the week—yes, again, a strange bout of rain, hardly remembered.

Earth dry, crumbling.

*** 10/9/15

Bel-Air:

A resident uses 11.8 million gallons of water last year.

A resident uses 1,300 gallons every hour.

A resident has five swimming pools and has applied for a permit to build a sixth.

*** 10/11/15

In 300 B.C., Sanskrit language was written down in different alphabets, in the different dialects of the regions of India. Chanda Gupta Charaya had sent scribes out to get the sacred stories and prayers written down, and then they were combined and edited. For our main chanting text, the *Chandi Path*, we use the most popular version from northern India. There are many different spellings and pronunciations throughout India. Bollywood uses mostly southern dialect and has had a big influence on the rest of India.

*

A thief was going to kill a wandering sadhu and then rob him, when the sadhu surprised him by asking him why he was killing people, creating bad karma for himself.

The thief said, I have to steal in order to take care of my family.

The sadhu said, Hmm. Ok... Well, how about before you kill me, you tie me up here to this tree and go ask your family if they think it's ok for you to steal and murder in order to take care of them.

In that moment, for the first time, the thief felt the need to pause before rushing on with his impulses, so he agreed to the sadhu's request. He knew this was a holy man, and none before had bothered to even talk to him. And it was, he admitted to himself, an all-time low for him to even think of killing this person, a sadhu, because what was he going to steal from him? His bowl?!

His family thought he earned his money from selling used things that he would scavenge from the region. He asked his parents and his wife's parents what they thought of a person who steals for money to provide for his family, and they said, Why ask? Everyone knows that is wrong. No one should do that.

Well, he said. What if they knew that their food and house were provided for them because of his stealing and killing? Wouldn't that make it alright?

They laughed, Ha ha! You must be joking! No family is going to want to take onto themselves the sharing of that bad karma.

He was feeling like his world was crumbling. He felt like sitting down and going to sleep, and maybe when he woke up this nightmare would disappear. He went and talked to his wife and his three teen children. And to his horror, they echoed what his parents and in-laws said.

It was as if his lifeblood had been drained from him. Here he thought he'd been demonstrating the ultimate sacrifice for his family, only to find out that his good intentions were being wiped out by the bad deeds. He returned to the sadhu, untied him, saying, My family sees it the way you do! They don't agree with being a party to my bad deeds. Is there any way that I can atone for the harm I have so blindly done?

Oh, sure, that's easy! What you do is your own karma, so do good. To get over your past misdeeds, and to start from here on out, repeat the name of God, Rama.

Oh, I don't think I can do that! It's too pure for me!

Ok, ok. How about you just say Mara? [It means "dead body."]

Yeah! Sure! Good idea!

So the thief went into the forest, sat down, and in great earnestness, started repeating, Mara. Just chanting the word with such sincerity, it changed into Rama. He sat there, growing more and more peaceful and happy, chanting and chanting, Rama Rama Rama. He stayed there many years, anthills grew up around him, and one large anthill, in fact, grew up over him. One day, God told him that he was very pleased and his sins were forgiven. God gave the thief the name Valmiki, He Who is Born from Anthills.

Valmiki established an ashram there. And when King Rama, the manifested form of the god Vishnu, was in exile, he met and was befriended by Valmiki. Later, when Rama exiled Sita from his kingdom, she stayed at Valmiki's ashram and birthed the twins Kusha and Lav there. By this

time, Valmiki had received the inspiration for and written down Rama and Sita and Hunuman's story, the *Ramayana*. He taught the epic story-poem to Kusha and Lav, who later told it to people throughout India. Their recitations of the *Ramayana* led to renewed respect from the people for Sita and her return to her rightful abode with King Rama.

*** 10/13/15

Reservoirs throughout California are at historic lows. If we get an El Nino wet year, we may still get more dry years, as in 1998-1999, when the El Nino was followed by the drought, El Nina.

The world of possibilities: grasses coming again, crickets singing. Not done until done. O heart, you say when. Green coming again through drizzling rain. A vision and message appearing while meditating: I had to build up and break down the possibilities. One life pointed this way, another life that way. But then I saw the one way in all ways. When despairing, it's only a partial eclipse. What seems pitch thick black, another moment bright.

*** 10/19/15

Did Joseph, of the *Bible*, follow the one God in the sense that yogis do—where we see the many in the one and the one in the many? Was that the point God was trying to convey, but it once again got mixed up in different sides of the family? Like with Arjuna and his relatives?

Swamiji: Yes, families have a way of mixing up their faith with their personal desires. Most often God supports what each individual wants, so all parties in a fight feel that God is on their side.

*** 10/6/15

Since 1979, Southern California has not met federal ozone standards.

*

October 15, 2015: Heavy rain creates flash floods and mudslides. Already existent high humidity and high ocean temperatures joins with and intensifies an eastern storm. Highway 58 is flooded with mud and will be closed from Mojave to Tehachapi for several days.

*

At United Nations' conferences on climate, less developed countries are interested in discussing how to keep in step with the changes, ways to finance climate change disruptions, and strategies for sharing technology. They do not find that imposed tariffs are helping with these concerns, and developing countries' focus on emissions is often exclusionary to their concerns.

*** 10/16/15

King Pandu attended the Syambara ceremony of Princess Kunti, where the young woman chooses her husband among the gathered suitors, and she chose him.

Kunti did not tell Pandu that when she was younger, she had had a child. Rishi Durvasha had been staying with her family as a guest, and she had demonstrated spiritual devotion by carefully attending to his needs. He said, Thank you, my child, for your loving service. I would like to give you a blessing of your own choice.

Kunti said, You in your infinite, timeless wisdom must know what would be best for my future. Please select the blessing that would be most suitable.

Very well! I am giving you a special mantra. You may call any deva and he will arrive and give you a child.

Kunti was so excited about this gift, and yet it seemed unbelievable. She stayed up all night imagining her future children. When the sun rose in the morning, she uttered the mantra, thinking of the sun god, Surya, who promptly came and gave her a child.

Of course, her family would be shocked, so she put the baby in a basket and sent it down the slow-moving river current. The king's charioteer lived downriver and found the baby that same day in a calm eddy. His wife Rhada was delighted to have a baby boy, and she named him Rhade.

Pandu and his new wife Kunti went home to Hastinapura. Pandu then had to go right back out to lay claim to all outlying kingdoms to make a united India. He was nearly done when he came to Madras. It was there that he was wed to a second wife, Madri, the sister of the Crown Prince, who offered her in a gesture of peace. Pandu was worried about possible discord between the two, but when the women met, Madri bowed down and offered to serve the family in peace. Kunti agreed and they all lived happily together.

*** 10/26/15

There, in Italy, my friend says it is over a hundred and that the heat is different from San Diego's. The stone streets, the enclosures of old buildings and narrow roads, makes, it feels to her, a more oppressive, heavy heat. She stays in. We had just talked of helping the environment in every small way we could, but she says she has to use the air conditioning.

*** 10/26/15

Some private residences take huge amounts of water without feeling the need to cut back, unless their habits are somehow exposed. A photographer flew over Barbra Streisand's extensive Malibu garden and then posted the pictures to bring attention to her water usage. It was after this that Streisand announced that she was reducing her water use.

*** 10/25/15

Queen Satyawati told Pandu that he should go to their forest home and take a rest with his wives, Kunti and Madri, now that he had unified India. He left his eldest brother, the blind Drtarashtra in charge.

At their forest home, Pandu, Kunti, and Madri enjoyed learning yogic wisdoms from Rishi Kindal. Unfortunately, one day Pandu tracked a lion far into the forest, and when it seemed he had the perfect chance, he shot his arrow into the brush where he thought the lion was, but

instead it was the rishi and his wife. With his last breaths, the rishi cursed Pandu, saying, If you touch any woman, you will die.

Pandu, of course, was heartbroken at killing his dear teacher and his wife, and he and his wives increased their spiritual practice as atonement. It was at this time that Pandu saw in a dream rishis walking into heaven, and he felt a strong desire to join them. But the rishis turned to him and said, No, it is not time. You must first leave a child on earth to fulfill the obligation of nurturing the next generation.

Pandu told his wives the dream, This doesn't make sense! Why would I be cursed in such a way that I can not have children, and then be told to have children?!

It was then that Kunti revealed the special blessing she had received when she was younger, and she laughed saying, We can have children by using the special mantra Rishi Durvasha gave me. And I will teach Madri the mantra so she can also bring forth children by calling deities with the prayer.

Kunti prayed to Dharma, and that given son was Yudhishtira; she prayed to Wind, and that son was Bhim; and she called Indra, and that son was Arjuna. Madri called the Ashvin Twins, and those sons were Nakula and Sahadeva.

At this time, Pandu's brother, King Drtarashtra had married Gandhari, and they had one hundred sons. Gandhari wore a blindfold so that she would be in the same kind of world as her husband.

Pandu would meditate next to a stream in the forest, and one day when Madri drew water for the household and then took her bath, Pandu lost his concentration. Completely forgetting his curse, he got up and hugged Madri, and he immediately dropped down dead. His wives were filled with grief, and they decided that Kunti would raise the children, and Madri would be the one to put her body onto the funeral pyre, as was the custom of the times. The soul being eternal, and the marriage being for eternity, the widow would no longer need her body, and she could join her partner in heaven.

*** 10/30/15

A kind of perfect weather day, warm sky in its clear blue Santa Ana, here a breeze, out east riled up. More fires could come. But we must not expect what might be. Haven't we been learning this? There is no truly knowing El Nino or other forces without names. Sky got veiled this week, the windshield in the morning appeared wet, but if a bit of rain let loose in the middle of the night, it was silent and ephemeral.

Full moon and things go awry: breakdowns: a flat tire; a bathroom sink pipe leaks; the kitchen side spray arm breaks off. It's Halloween week. They say the veil between worlds is thin, we get closer to the disembodied spirit world.

Rabbits run around in the hills where there is no stream. They look me in the eye.

*** 10/30/15

What they said might happen is happening: the sky is asserting its prowess, banging about with thunder, sending off explosions of lightning, cold like we never knew heat, like we could be high up in a land of snow. And rain sent down as flood.

We'd been warned since July a heavy rain would visit once a month. But it hasn't.

And now: This first week of November, this November 3rd outpouring from a sky so long enshrouded in its drought.

What can we learn, when what we think we know comes undone in a sudden turn?

We learn to bow to the great earth and sky, our mother and father.

*

It is at last cold. And sky sends overbrimming rain. Cars spin, sirens howl in distant streets. The homeless that were forewarned but stayed in the riverbeds get flushed out. Rabbits used to doing without huddle into their lairs, wide-eyed. The burned acres shapeshift in wild moving mud. I pray my windows and roof don't leak.

*

Wind arrived a few days ago, hot and in surges of great power. It would rest by evening and start again in the afternoon. Enormous, flouncy clouds rose up in the east, coming together, making one. Light playing and dark. Rainbow fragments, jewels of hope.

*** 11/3/15

Having completed her tapasya/sacrifices in the forest, Kunti went back to Hastinapura. But Prince Duryodhana, Drtarashtra's and Gandhari's eldest son, was not happy about the five cousins living there; he thought they were not prepared for the royal life and he was worried about Yudhishthira, Kunti's eldest son, taking the crown.

The children learned dharmic skills from Guru Krpacharya. The guru would always have Yudhishtira be the lead in their activities. He was the son Kunti birthed from praying to Dharma.

Ghandari, the blindfolded wife of Drtarashtra, had a brother named Shakuni. Shakuni thought everything had been unfairly upturned at Hastinapura, starting with his sister being married to Dratarashtra instead of Pandu. He was sure that Ghandari's son Duryodhana, the eldest of the hundred brothers, should become the next king, and he would take the boy aside and tell him so whenever he had a chance.

The second son of Pandu and Kunti, Bhim, given by Kunti's praying to the Wind God, ate some rice pudding one day with Duryodhana, but Bhim's portion was poisoned and he passed out. While he was unconscious, Duryodhana took Bhim's body and put it into the river.

The Nagas, Serpent People, found Bhim and brought him to the King of the Nagas. When Bhim was coming around, the king asked him who he was. He said, I'm Kunti's son.

Kunti! The king was surprised to hear this because Kunti was his granddaughter. The king ordered special remedies to restore Bhim to good health and to also give him extraordinary strength. Bhim went home and told his Kanti and Madri-born brothers all that happened.

The boys' weaponry teacher was Dronacharya. Arjuna, Kanti's son from the God Indra, Ruler of the Heavens, was an excellent archer, and at the graduation when each of the sons demonstrated their proficiency, Arjuna brought rain, wind, and fire with his speedy arrows. Just when Dronacharya was proclaiming that Arjuna was the best archer, a voice in the audience shouted, Wait! Let me show you my skill with bow and arrow!

Who are you? Dronacharya asked.

I am Karna.

Who is your mother?

If you want to see who is the best archer in all of India, don't ask about my family, watch my fine skill with arrows!

No, I am sorry, we can not allow that here. This is the graduation weaponry demonstration of all the Hastinapura boys.

But after the graduation, Duryodhana talked to Karna and said he would very much like to give him the Angedsha kingdom, of which he'd been endowed when he was young. Delighted with this, Karna said, Oh, thank you so much for seeing my gift of archery as worthy of your gift of a kingdom! I will defend the kingdom as if it is yours, with my very life and breath!

*** 11/8/15

It was a day of hope. The monthly rains signifying gardens to be. Tears for what seems to stay in place, a passage I don't move through. Thank you soon after because what is most important is always here.

But there seems to be a sequence out of order. It seems before and after could trade places, could be not what they are.

*** 11/8/15

Snow:

36 inches in Mammoth

12 in Tahoe

This was not an El Nino storm and it remains to be seen if we will get a drought-breaking winter and spring.

*

The Inland Empire—Eastern Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside—has the highest air pollution in the country. The Sierra Club wants the South Coast Air Quality Management to stop blaming the pollution on the drought and do more to regulate the oil refineries.

*** 11/10/15

It might seem strange to believe and to be in this way, getting to an age of doing big things in a small, small way. There are huge lakes that once were that no longer are.

Now the sky is soft blue and the southern horizon ribboned in white.

Light shifted, cold moved into mornings and some days.

Some days of rain, but we don't really know what winter will look like. Mid-November, and there is snow at long last in the Sierras. We must not cling to a hoped-for future; it could be dry.

*

Another patch of old-timer native plants next to the freeway ripped out by Cal Trans and replanted with the non-native, soil-poisoning pepper trees.

But in a rare instance, I saw that same day at another onramp an old patch of iceplant being replaced with native yuccas; it looks like it was probably someone's personal project.

Lake Cahuilla in the Salton Basin of Southern California, its upper portion in Indio and extending into Baja, was over a hundred miles long and thirty-five miles wide, fed primarily by the Colorado River. It grew and receded according to cycles of the directional flow of the river; the latest appearance was at the beginning of the seventeenth century. You can still see the mark of its former shoreline in the hillsides. Cahuilla Indians lived along its shore 900 years ago, and Cahuilla stories featuring the lake have been passed down to this day. The Natives say that the water had eventually completely evaporated when the river ceased flowing in that direction.

So Lake Cahuilla, once enormous, is now gone. And when it dried up, Coyote came down from the mountains and gave us mesquite, prickly pear, and all the plants that can grow on just a little rain and that we can eat.

*** 11/14/15

Although King Drtarashtra had put off as long as he could bestowing the title Crown Prince to one of the many sons, he at last gave it to Yudhisthira, Dharma and Kunti's son.

Duryodhana, who still believed that he should be the Crown Prince, suggested to his father, Drtarashtra, that the Pandava boys and their mother, Kunti go for a restful retreat in the forest. And he said he had already begun building a special palace to accommodate all their needs. The

king considered this a splendid, generous idea, and Yudhistira also was happy about it when the king requested he take the family there.

When they got to the forest palace, they found it had no windows and one door. Someone arrived saying, I am a digger and Prime Minister Vidura has asked me to make a tunnel leading away from the house. There is a plot to burn you all in this house—the walls are filled with pine pitch!

Bhim watched every night for when anyone might sneak onto the property to light the house on fire. When the time came, the family entered the tunnel, and just before he did too, he set the house on fire and the arsonists themselves were trapped in the flames.

Once safely out of the tunnel, Bhim and Arjuna began discussing plans for attacking Hastinapura. But Yudhishtira, the son of Dharma, reasoned, If we attack Hastinapura in order to exercise revenge against Duryodhana, who is most certainly the one who wanted to kill us, we will also be attacking Grandfather Bhishma, and our Guru-Teachers, Dronacharya and Krpacharya. If we are going to do attacking to bring justice, it must not be now and in this way.

Kunti said, Let's go further into the forest and live simply and in peace.
They all agreed, and so they did.

*** 11/15/15

It could rain. Clouds in all sorts of guises have moved around the sky all day.

This morning they moved from the east and collected into one dense grey group in the west.

And then, a bit later, broke apart.

And the air turned away from its dry chill to a tepid current, the motions going in all directions.

Why should I be anxious?

Here is sky, ground.

Some acorns from some oaks.
Some places, none.

*

These cusps of fall to winter, there is the sadness of summer's bounty of light now gone, the coming indoors and the layering of clothes to go out on cold days. Some people are chaffing at the sky's moods; talking with the need to be heard, as if embraced.

*** 11/15/15

Draupadi had been born from divine fire, and the day came when her father, King Draupad was presenting her to marriage suitors in the Svayambara ceremony. The kings from throughout India were in attendance, alongside the Pandava brothers, who were not recognized because they were dressed in the garments of renunciate Brahmins.

To make the contest for his daughter extremely difficult, King Draupad had a wooden fish attached to a revolving wheel on the ceiling and a bowl of water set into the center of the room. Each suitor would have to lift a heavy bow, look only into the reflection of the fish in the bowl of water, and then shoot an arrow into the fish target.

One by one, the suitors came up to try their hand at the challenge, but none were even able to lift the bow. Duryodhana walked proudly up to the bow, but he, too, was unable to lift it. His good friend Karna approached the bow, and he was able to, but as he did, Draupadi jumped up and shouted, Stop!! You are not a King. I don't care that Duryodhana has given you a kingdom! In my eyes you are a commoner and have no royal blood!

Although Karna was eager to show off his skill, he did not want to create discord, so he put the bow down. When all the other suitors had tried and failed to lift the bow, Arjuna stepped forward and just like that, with no effort, set the arrow straight into the center of the moving fish. And so it was that he was to be Draupadi's husband.

Duryodhana shouted to the king, This Brahmin is not eligible to wed your daughter!

He raised his sword and Karna joined him. The Pandava brothers left with Bhim blocking the doorway and fighting off Duryodhana and Karna.

When the brothers reached their forest home, Arjuna called before coming through the door, Mother, we've brought something good home!

Kunti was cooking dinner and she called back, thinking he was talking about food, Wonderful! Share it with each other!

But once they were all together in the kitchen, and she saw Draupadi, her face fell. She knew that according to the custom of obeying a mother's commands, all five brothers would be required to now be married to Draupadi. And a woman married to more than one man was not legal at that time.

But just then Lord Krishna appeared, and he said, Draupadi was once serving Shiva and won a boon from him. She asked to have a husband who had these five qualities: complete loyalty to dharma, strong as two elephants, a superior archer, and very handsome. And in another lifetime as Sita, she asked Shiva five times for a husband. Shiva has given her what she requested as an auspicious blessing, and so none of you need feel there is something wrong here.

Wanting to know where his sister was going with the Brahmins, Draupadi's brother, Dhrishtadyumna had secretly followed them all to their home. When he heard all that was said, he went back and told his father, King Draupad. Rishi Vyasa assured the king that although it was

against the law for a woman to have five husbands, this situation was due to holy blessings granted by Lord Shiva to Draupadi for all her good deeds. The king held a great wedding celebration for his lovely daughter and the Pandava brothers. And once back home, Draupadi, while respecting all the brothers, became the heart and soul mate to Yudhishtira, the would-be king.

*** 11/17/15

On the eastern side of Lake Crowley, there are tufa-like columns, the result of cold water reacting with the hot volcanic ash of the volcano that erupted 760,000 years ago

*** 11/17/15

What I wanted as a child, I didn't get all of it. And new desires came along, including what I want now. If I had it all, would I have it all?

The man in the wheelchair at the park tells me he came back from the war crippled, not at all the body he left here with. Another older vet sleeps on the street in a dirty sleeping bag between parked cars.

And still the old apple tree is giving fruit.

It sounded like rain all through the night, crashing against one wall and then another, moving around the roof and ground. But this morning, early, when I opened the front door to go walking, all was completely dry.

Searing cold and thrashing wind, the eye of sky wide-open blue. All day that insistent cold and wind.

Whatever we want can wait, can evaporate, can get blown past remembering, can whirlwind into now and now.

*** 11/17/15

King Drtarashtra had appointed his son Duryodhana to be the Crown Prince. But one day all the Pandava brothers, Kunti, and Draupadi appeared at the palace, intending to reside there again. Bishma and the gurus Dronacharya and Krpacharya were pleased to see them; Queen Kunti had been sure they would continue to honor her and her family, and to be her allies in the midst of Drtarashtra's hostility. With their arrival, the king was even more upset and hostile because Yudhishtira was then also eligible to be the Crown Prince. The king didn't want to have his own son go through the same kind of disappointment that he had had when Pandu had been appointed King over him even though he was the rightful heir. So he decided to divide the kingdom in two: Duryodhana would rule the area around Hastinapura, and Yudhishtira would rule an outlying area.

Yudhishtira and his family went to their land, only to discover that it was a desert decimated by years of drought, and even the wellsprings were barren.

*** 11/20/15

And the sky changes again its dome of cold, now hot again. Sitting out at sundown without a jacket. The ground dry, no sign of last week's rain, but for the sproutings surviving the strong sunlight.

Little lizards appearing again.

In Santa Barbara, the city asked its citizens to reduce their water use by 25%, and instead, the people reduced it by 35%.

Sinner and sage, there's no escaping under this dome sky being both.

California has the highest poverty rate of any state in the country.

L.A. has the most homeless people in the country. What does this have to do with weather and drought? Everything. The more wells that have been depleted, the more there are who are poor.

*** 11/20/15

Coyote is somewhere ahead of me, fresh scat of manzanita berry leading me to the one tree that hasn't yet dropped all its fruit.

Creeks dry, filled with grasses.

*** 11/25/15

Rama's brother Ugrasena was the king of the Mathura region. His son Kamsa was not at all like his kind and good father. When Kamsa became a teenager, he violently took over the kingdom and put his father in prison, and he joined other evil rulers in a campaign to eliminate India's ancient Vedic spiritual practices.

Although Vasudeva was already married to Rohini, King Kamsa ordered him to also marry Devaki to strengthen their ally forces. Just as their marriage ceremony ended, a heavenly voice boomed that their eighth child would kill Kamsa. Kamsa immediately drew his sword and was about to slay Devaki, but Vasudeva pleaded that he would give his children to Kamsa in exchange for sparing Devaki's life.

Kamsa had the couple imprisoned, and each time they had a child, Kamsa would kill the newborn. When Devaki was pregnant with her seventh baby, with her spiritual gifts she moved the fetus to Rohini, Rama's other wife.

Rohini gave birth to Balarama, and they lived with Yoshada and Nanda Rao in Gokula. Yosahada soon gave birth to a daughter, a manifestation of the Divine Mother, Durga.

And Devaki at midnight of this same day gave birth to Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Vasudeva and Devaki immediately recognized Vishnu in their beautiful son, and a

heavenly voice said, Vasudeva, take your son now, the prison gates are open for you. Run to Gokula and exchange this divine child for Yoshada's divine baby girl.

There was terrible storm that night, and Vasudeva had to cross the Jamuna River to get to Gokula. The seat of Vishnu, the Ananta Snake, acted as an umbrella in their crossing. Vasudeva safely made the transfer and returned before daybreak to the prison cell. When Kamsa heard of the birth of the eighth child and that it was a girl, he still felt threatened, so he stormed into the cell to kill the child. But he no sooner had seized the infant then it flew up into the air, and suddenly appeared as the mighty eight-armed Durga. She laughed, You fool! You don't see that the one who will bring about your death has been born and is not here.

And with that pronouncement, she vanished.

That very day, Kamsa ordered all his soldiers under his rule to kill all the newborns in the entire region. When he heard that Krishna was still on the loose, Kamsa sent demons to kill Krishna, but when they found him, baby Krishna killed each and every one of them. When none of Kamsa's demons returned at the end of the day, he realized that Krishna had escaped, and so he still lived in fear of the prophecy that the eighth child would kill him.

*** 11/27/15

Yorba Linda residents cut their use of water this past summer by 40% because their rates were raised 300%.

*** 11/27/15

Another night of cold rain. In the dark, the rhythm playing roof and leaves, ground. Somewhere a full moon, sometimes known, sometimes not.

And in that epic poem chanted in the morning dark, the king has lost his kingdom, the business man has been rejected by his family. Too Much, Too Little, Self Deprecation, and Self Conceit cause conflicts.

And the poem says the king and businessman sit down by the river and set up a little altar and take turns stoking the fire, and turn their minds and hearts to God, praying. Just that, just that. And the Goddess comes to them and blesses them, and releases them from all of their worries.

It cleared long enough to seem like the day would be navigable outdoors. So I headed the car to the mountains. Got up to the pines, to 6,000 feet, to a new world of new snow, the sky almost as white as the trees impressed to it. The kind of snow like a magic dust from heaven, delicate, soft. Sun coming into places and the snow ephemeral, to be known as a dream.

*** 11/27/15

When Maa and Swmaiiji first came together to the U.S., they flew into L.A., and they had no money. They were given a car, and they moved around, doing pujas in people's homes, and people became devotees. At first, they slept in the car, and then they stayed with devotees as they travelled around the U.S.

*** 11/29/15

The people of Krishna's village were preparing their annual ceremony for Indra, the god of thunder and rain, to ensure enough rain in the coming year for their farms. Although Krishna was just a boy, he told the villagers that their worship should be directed to their cows because the gentle cows gave them so much of their daily food: milk, ghee, yogurt, paneer. And to also give thanks to the tulsi herb that they used for incense and health.